MESSAGES OF HOPE

GEORGE MATHESON

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To Nurse
from M. Murray.
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Rev. George Matheson D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.E.

MESSAGES OF HOPE

By

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Author of
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"LEAVES FOR QUIET HOURS"

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PREFATORY NOTE.

SOME ten or twelve of the brief treatises embodied in this book have already appeared in the pages of *The Christian World*. The remainder, on the author's death, existed only in the blind-type characters which constituted his own peculiar "Braille." His secretary, however, has contrived to render this MS. into ordinary copy, word for word; and, at the publishers' request, the discourses are here offered in collective form. They represent some of the ripest fruit of the author's intellect, as they are largely the product of his latest hours; should any one "Message" bring "Hope" to the weary and heavy-laden, George Matheson's latest labours will not have been in vain.

W. S.

EDINBURGH, 1908.

MESSAGES OF HOPE

The Anniversaries Kept in Heaven

"The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born in Zion."—Ps. LXXXVII. 6.

I UNDERSTAND the meaning of the passage to be that the anniversaries of the future will be held for the righteous. We observe at present the anniversaries of the intellectually great—of the poet, of the statesman, of the distinguished general, of the scientific discoverer. But, without disparaging these, the psalmist looks forward to a time when the birthdays observed will be on the ground of goodness. We hold the natal days of the heroes of history. What a surprise it would create if it were to be announced that a commemorative service was to be held to keep the centenary of some humble woman historically unknown! And yet, it is not too much to say that in the large majority of cases the distinguished have been indebted to the unknown. Many a man who has had his theatre in the world has had

his metropolis in the nursery; the crucial hours of his life have been the hours the world never saw—the hours spent at a mother's knee and brightened by a mother's teaching. Many a great thinker has got his wisdom from some obscure schoolmaster "never heard of half-a-mile from home"—from one who had all the thought in his soul but just lacked the gift of expression. Many a successful candidate for life's favour has owed his power of endurance to the cheering words of some optimistic Christian who met him at a time of despondency and prevented him from giving in. Many a toiling wrestler for the cure of human disease was first taught to love humanity by witnessing the holy patience of some humble sufferer who bore without repining, who was afflicted and murmured not, who carried the cross and made no sign. The man who has reached the top of the mountain has been stimulated by the cry, "Excelsior"; but it has been oftener the voice of another than of himself. It has come from the valley, from the place of the lowly, from the scene of the undistinguished. The deeds of silent sacrifice, the homes of humble piety, the acts of covert kindness, the words of unrecorded righteousness, the examples of unpublished purity —these have been the sources of human greatness.

Lord, Thou hast in Thy future a place for all souls; but Thy monuments are for the men of Zion—the sons of sacrifice. Thou hast a crown for each sphere of successful toil; but Thine anniversaries will be given to the sowers of the seed. We of the present world uncover our heads to the flowers in their bloom and the trees in their foliage. But the bloom was not the beginning of the flowers; the foliage was not the beginning of the trees. The beginning of both was underground—in a lonely place, a silent place, an unseen place. It is on these lonely and silent and unseen places that Thine eye resteth; it is there Thou lookest for the birthdays of the great. I often say in despair, "Is my humble life worth a future world; what have I done for the making of *this?*" Teach me, O Lord, the fallacy of my thought; show me that the sphere of the humble is ever the sphere where worlds are made! Reveal to me the future majesty of things that now seem poor! I would see, not the crown, but the cradle, of empire—not the blossom, but the bud, of dominion. I would see Shakespeare in the shell, Newton in the nursery, Bacon in the swaddling bands, Homer at the hearth, Dante in the day-school, Milton at the family meal, Goethe at his games, Plato in the pastimes of his youth.

Show me the moulders of their early moments—the counsellors of their conduct, the framers of their faith, the architects of their aspiration, the trainers of their tuition, the directors of their desires, the partners in their pleasures, the leaders of their leisure hours! Then shall I know why it is that Thy birthdays for the race are those of the men born in *Zion*.

The Grief that implies Glory

"He began to teach them, that the Son of Man must suffer many things."—MARK VIII. 31.

"HE *began* to teach them." It was indeed the beginning of a new lesson for humanity. The old lesson for humanity had been that a "Son of Man" must suffer nothing—that the higher the life the more exempt should it be from pain. That belief was embedded deep in the heart both of Gentile and Jew. The Gentile deified massive strength—strength on which the woes of the world could make no impression and which was incapable of tears. The Jew exalted the sons of the morning—the men who basked in fortune's radiant smile; he deemed that the most dowered must be to God the dearest. Christianity began to paint a fresh ideal of humanity—an opposite ideal. It said that the test of a man's height was not his inability, but his capacity, to feel. "The Son of Man *must* suffer many things." It is not merely that He may, but that He must. Suffering is involved in the fact that He *is* the Son of

Man—that He is at the top of the hill. If He were lower down, He would be protected. The very elevation of His person has put Him in collision with the full sweep of the blast and the full coldness of the air. Remember, that was the very source of Christ's temptation in the wilderness. The tempter said: "If you are the Son of Man, you ought to enjoy yourself. You should have no want of bread, no fear of precipices, no dread of the kingdoms of the world and their glory; you should live sumptuously, walk recklessly, reign despotically." Christ reverses all this. He says it is just because He is Son of Man that He is bound to suffer—to feel as a personal hunger the world's want of bread, to experience as a personal fear the world's danger of falling, to share as a personal burden the world's subjection to human tyrannies. And though He stands at the top, the principle is in measure true for those who are climbing. There is a suffering which the good alone can know. There is a furnace which is only heated for the man of God, a den of lions which only awaits the holy. Not every eye can weep over Jerusalem—that is a *Divine* gift of tears. Men said of Jesus, "Let God deliver him if he delighted in him!"—if he is good, why is he so burdened! Had He been less good He

would have been less burdened. His purity made His pain; His tenderness made His tears; His selflessness made His sorrow; His righteousness made Him restless; His lustre made Him lonely; His kindness made Him kinless; His crown made His cross. It was because He was the Son of Man He had not where to lay His head.

Lord, Thy pain can cure all other pain; let me enter into its secret! There is no homœopathy in all the world like this by which Thy sorrow conquers mine. Nothing but unselfish grief can banish my selfish care. Joy cannot; care would corrupt it in an hour. Beauty cannot; life's dust would dim it in a day. Fame cannot; the weary heart would wither it in a night. Wealth cannot; the strength of conscious toil would steal it from my soul. But, if I could get the Divine homœopathy, I should be cured. *Thou* canst bestow it, O my God. Give me a new care, and the old will die. Send me Thy weight, and I shall have wings. Give me Thy cross, and I shall be crowned. Let me hear the sigh of the weary, and mine will be silent. Let me lift the load of the poor, and mine will be lightened. Let me carry the burden of the weak, and mine will be banished. Let me listen to the murmurs of the sick, and mine will be mute. Let me aid the task

of the toiling, and mine will be tearless. Let me touch the hand of the leper, and mine will be healed. Let me help the feet of the lame, and mine will be flying. Let me arrest the falls of the tempted, and mine will be few. May the pain of the Son of Man be my panacea for pain!

The Necessity of Faith to Morality

"The just shall live by his faith."—HABAKKUK II. 4.

Is not this a singular statement. Is not the just man—the man of practical morality—the last man in the world whom we should expect to live by his faith. There *are* classes of men whom we should expect to live by their faith. The poet lives by his faith, for he aspires after an unearthly ideal. The painter lives by his faith, for there floats before him a superhuman beauty. The musician lives by his faith, for his inner ear catches melodies which his instruments cannot express. Even the husbandman lives by his faith, for he commits the seed to a life underground. But the just man—the man of practical morality—how can *he* be said to live by his faith! Is he not building his trust upon definite outward acts, on obedience to a command? Yes, but whose command? To a command which is inaudible to the outer ear. The voice of conscience is not uttered by anything within the world. It is not

uttered by beauty; you may gaze on the woods and fields without hearing it. It is not uttered by prudence; you may study your own interests for days without meeting it. It is not uttered by law; you may be condemned by a criminal court without receiving its message. This mysterious voice is independent of places and times. It comes at the most unlikely moment; it fails to come at the most likely. It may be absent during the most solemn religious service; it may be heard in the whirl of the dance and in the vortex of gay society. The Garden of Eden may be deaf to it; the haunts of corruption may ring with it. It may elude the thunder, the earthquake, and the fire; it may breathe in the still small sound of a human word. The stars of night may fail to declare it; the streets of the garish day may resound with its solemn refrain. The man who listens to it is walking by faith. It has no mandate from the world; it has no reward from the world; it has no promise from the world. It is a message from an unearthly sphere sent for an unearthly reason and accompanied by the offer of an unearthly recompense. No poet or painter or musician lives more by faith than the man of outward virtue.

O Thou Voice Divine, whose walking is *not*

limited to the cool of the day, come into my active hours! Come where the clouds are gathering, where the wheels of commerce roll! Often does the tempter meet me there. He promises the kingdoms and their glory if I will do an unjust thing. If I look only to human motives, I shall follow the tempter. But my justice can live by faith. Support me, O Lord, by considerations that are not seen below! Come where competitors are thronging, where rival claims appear! Often does the tempter meet me there. He says, "Detract from your rival, and you shall win; throw mire on his garment, and your own will shine." And if I walked by sight, I might well do so. But give me faith to look beyond the eye, to know that man liveth not by bread alone! Come where the gay are mustering, where society selects the strongest for the race! Often does the tempter meet me there. He says, "Attach yourself to the highest, keep close to the men of power, avoid all contact with the broken lives." And the flesh would counsel me to obey. But, in such an hour, let *faith* speak to me! Show me the beauties of the broken! Teach me the possibilities of the poor! Tell me Thy hopes for the heavy-laden! Send me Thy sigh for the sad! Point me to the unseen glory—the gold covered

by the fading grass, the clearness behind the cloud, the mighty destiny concealed in momentary dust! Then shall I give a hand to the rejected masses; for the charity killed by sight shall live by the power of faith.

The Source of Christian Firmness

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."—EPH. VI. 10.

"THE power of the might of Jesus"—what a phrase to break upon the ears of the Roman empire! "Be strong in the Lord"—it must have seemed the wildest of paradoxes! To the eye of that Roman world the Lord of the Christians was anything but strong. A man of lowly mien, a man of gentleness, a man that did not strive nor cry, a man that gave his cheek to the smiters and when he was reviled reviled not again—it was the last image which we should expect to convey to Paul's contemporaries the idea of strength. It must have sounded to them like speaking of a square circle. We could understand the apostle saying, "Be *meek* in the Lord," "Be patient in the Lord," "Be peaceable in the Lord"; but to point men to Jesus as a specimen of Roman strength—that was strange. Yet the instinct which prompted it was profoundly true. I have no hesitation in saying that the quality of

Christ's strength was Roman, for its essential feature was tenacity of will. But the strange thing is that it came to Him by an opposite process from that by which it reached the Roman. It reached the Roman by a suppression of gentle feelings; it reached the Son of Man by a waking of gentle feelings. The tenacity of Christ's will came from the very fact that His heart was melting with love. The robust and the sentimental are usually considered opposites; but it is a mistake. Nothing produces a will of iron like a heart of wax; it is *gentleness* that makes you great. When does the will assume its iron tenacity? It is when the mind is softened by a deep affection. Youth is said to be more unsteady than manhood, more wavering in resolution, more prone to be tempted. I believe this to be true; but why is it so? Not because youth is hotter, but because youth has fewer softening ties. When love comes, when home comes, when fatherhood comes, when the load of responsibilities is laid upon the heart, then it is that the will becomes steadfast, then it is that determination has the strength of brass. That is the strength of the Lord. It is firmness grounded on feeling; it is bravery created by burden; it is will stiffened by weightedness. Paul might well say, "Wherein I am weak there I am

strong"; for it is the softening influences of humanity that make us undaunted and it is the melting tenderness of love that gives us power to bear.

O Thou whose nature and whose name is Love, come into my heart that I may be strong! Without Thee in my soul the forces of life outmaster me. I fall before the wind of temptation, I sink beneath the sea of difficulty. I need Roman strength, but no Roman method will give it me. I can only get Roman strength by the method un-Roman—by the softening of the heart to my brother's cry. Therefore I beseech Thee to melt the ice in my soul, that the river of Thy pleasures may flow there. I have read that Samson's enemies sought to deprive him of strength by binding him. But *Thy* strength only *comes* to me when I am bound. It is only when I am encompassed by the ties of life that I am really strong. Bind me, O my God! Encircle me with many bonds! Put on love's golden fetters! Surround me with a chain of human responsibilities! Let me guard my life more bravely by the sense that it is not free! In the hour of temptation let me remember that I am not my own! Let me remember the lives that lean upon me! Let me remember a father's cares and a mother's

prayers! Let me remember the children that cry for bread, whose future I can make or mar! Let me remember that my night may cloud a brother's morning, my fall evoke a sister's tears, my blot efface a bridal bloom! Let me remember, above all, that I am bound to outside souls—that my deed of shame must make humanity poorer, that the tarnish on my hand must dim a hundred hearts! The memory of my ties will make resistance strong; I shall learn in love the power of Thy might.

The Use of Isolated Moments

"No man shall come up with thee."—Ex. xxxiv. 3.

HERE was a Divine call to solitude. I should have missed something in the Bible if this one clause had been left out of it. It abounds in calls of another sort—exhortations to join the *brotherhood* of men. It has calls to the ministry, calls to the mission field, calls to work, calls to domestic duty, calls to public life. But there are moments of many souls in which they are doomed to be alone—to have no man with them. The inspirations of genius are such moments; the voices of the crowd then sound from afar. The throbs of conscience are such moments; the heart then speaks to itself alone. The arrests by sickness are such moments; we feel shunted from the common way. The approaches of death are such moments; the hour comes to all, but it comes separately to each. We should have missed something from the Bible if amid the many voices of God there had been no place found for such moments as these. But with this verse of Exodus

before us, the want is supplied. I learn that my times of solitude as well as my days of crowdedness are a mission from the Divine. There is a lesson which my soul can only get from solitude; it is the majesty of the individual. Society tells me I am only a cipher—an insignificant drop in a mighty stream. But when I am alone, when the curtain is fallen on my brother man, when there seems in the universe but God and I, it is then I know what it is to be an individual soul; it is then that there breaks on me the awful solemnity, the dread responsibility, the sublime weightedness, of having a personal life. Therefore it is that betimes my Father summons me into the solitude. Therefore it is that betimes He calls me up to the lonely mount and cries, "Let no man come with thee." Therefore it is that betimes He shuts the door on my companionships, and bars the windows to the street, and deafens the ear to the world's roar. He would have me see myself by *His* light, measure myself by His standard, know myself even as I am known.

I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast consecrated my solitary moments. They have always been part of my life, but I looked on them as useless to *Thee*. I never really thought them a portion of Thy training till I heard Thy

voice calling to Moses, "No man shall come up with thee." But then it all broke on me; and, ever since, my isolated moments have been radiant. I can never again deem them outside Thy plan. Often, when my strength was weakened in the way and I lay prostrate on the bed of pain, I used to say, "God has no longer a place for me; my work for Him is over." It never dawned on me that there might be a command to *silence* as well as to speech. But when I heard that voice of Thine to Moses, my wilderness blossomed as the rose. I ceased to say that my service of Thee had been interrupted. It had not been interrupted. My bed of pain was in the one room which had a mirror; it was there I first saw *myself*. I had seen my brother a hundred times; I had stood amid the crowd and beheld the world sweep on. But, just because there were myriads, there was no mirror; just because there was rush, there was no reflection. There is a stream in whose waters no one sees *himself*—the stream of fashion. I found no mirror till I reached the silent room and heard Thee shut the door upon the busy throng. And then, in that secluded hour, I met my inmost soul. I saw my image face to face because I was alone. I thought it was not mine; I tried to disown it. I wrestled

with it in the silent room; I sought to make it call itself by another name. But it would not. It said, "I am thyself—thy sinful self, thine unworthy self." I had never seen my image at the daybreak, for conscience is killed by the crowd; but the speechless hour of night made it visible, and the shrunk sinew proved that it was mine. I bless Thee for the time in which Thou saidst, "No man shall come up with thee."

The Season for Divine Help

"Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him."—GEN. XXXII. 1.

THE important word here, as I think, is the word "met." It is distinctly implied that no supernatural help came to Jacob at the *beginning*. He went out on his own way and on the strength of his own resources; it was only in the middle of his journey that he encountered the angels of God. And I believe this is typical of the life of every man. We are most of us under a mistake on this point. We often see young people waiting for a special call to some mission—for a manifest intervention of God that says, "This is the way; walk ye in it." I would tell such that the special call does not come at the outset; they must start without it. There is a great difference between not having a special call to go and having a special call *not* to go. The latter case is a very common one, and it should certainly be taken as a prohibition. Many a man has a family dependent on him for bread. Many a woman has an

aged mother to nurse. Many a youth has an ancestral taint of delicacy which incapacitates for active service. All these hear a voice which says, "Do *not* work to-day in my vineyard." But sometimes a man has no prohibition, but simply an inability to see the full length of the way. In extreme youth I was offered in a crowded town an appointment which involved weekly preaching at two services. I had only twelve sermons, and I did not see where the thirteenth was to come from. I was tempted to decline. But I asked myself the question, "Are you adequate to the *twelve?*" and I answered, "Yes." Then I said to myself: "God's presence will not reveal itself till your own power is exhausted. He has given you twelve talents to begin with. Do not bury them, do not lay them up in a napkin; go in your own strength as far as you can; and on the way He will meet you and light your torch anew." The experience was abundantly realised—but I turn aside from the personal. The principle is as true to you. If there is a multitude to be fed in the wilderness, it is no proof of your disqualification that you have only five loaves. You *have* five; and that is your call to a beginning. You have probably material for ten people. Minister to the ten! Do not let the eleventh frighten you before-

hand! Take each case as it comes! Break the bread as far as it will go! Refuse to paralyse yourself by looking forward! Keep the eleventh man in abeyance until you have come up to him; and then the angels will meet you with their twelve baskets, and the crowd will greet you with their blessings, and the limit will expand into an overflow.

Lord, free me from the dread of to-morrow! I have often heard it said of a man, "He sank beneath the burden and heat of the day." I do not think that is the real experience of life. I have never found insupportable the burden and heat of the day; Thou hast never made that too strong for any man. No, my Father, it is the burden and heat of *to-morrow* that overwhelm the traveller. Not by the load of present weights but by the sense of weights to come, do we fall. There are not more drops in my Gethsemane cup than I can bear; but in looking into that cup I see the shadow of something which seems *un*bearable—to-morrow. I would say with reverence, "Father, let every cup pass from me except the cup of each hour!" Veil from me the vision of to-morrow's fear; nay, let me myself veil it! Let me refuse to look at it until the hour has come! Let me decline to measure my strength with a day which

has not dawned! I can measure my strength with yesterday, for yesterday is past and my strength for it is chronicled. But my strength for to-morrow is as much in the future as to-morrow itself; it does not yet *appear* what it shall be. Let me wait for it, O Lord! Let me close the shutters against the threatened cloud! Men tell me that in the midst of the way I shall meet the storm and the roar and the battle; but they forget that in the midst of the way I shall meet also Thy ministering angels.

Christian Manliness

"Quit you like men."—1 Cor. xvi. 13.

At first sight we might say that these words were spoken to the Christian adult. That is not my view. To whom are we in the habit of saying, "Quit you like men"? Is it to grown-up people? No, it is to children. Our stimulus is always the stage beyond us. The Boys' Brigade is an imitation of the Man's Brigade and would have no interest on any other footing. The girl's doll is an imitation of the woman's child and would have no charm on any other basis. The very games of childhood are intended to represent the competitive struggles in the game of life. It is to mental children that Paul means to speak when he says, "Quit you like men." But it is to be feared that a child's idea of a man is a very mistaken one. It often looks forward with pleasure to the prospect of "grown-up-ness," but it is on the ground that the stage of manhood will be a stage of increased independence. "When I am grown up, I shall do

as I like," is the utterance of many a child. Yet the actual process is exactly in the reverse ratio. I have no hesitation in saying that the man differs from the child precisely in the fact that he has less power than the child of doing what he likes. The child receives many prohibitions, but they are nearly all from the outside; the man has fewer prohibitions from the outside, but he has many more from within. The advance from childhood to manhood is an advance from less to greater dependence, from a will more free to a will more circumscribed and bounded. The boy has less restraint than the man. A hundred voices tempt young Adam to the forbidden fruit which to the mature mind cry, "Thou shalt not." Young Adam feels free when he has hid himself among the trees of the garden. But the mature mind does not feel liberated by the overshadowing trees; he has restraint from *within*. Conscience cries "No"; principle cries "No"; prudence cries "No"; love cries "No"; common interest cries "No." It is the man and not the child that is bound by the cherubim and flaming sword. The manliest will is the will that is least free. Childhood leaps through the plots of paradise and crushes them as it goes; manhood tries to do the same, but the ties of myriad hearts impede the

wayward limbs and say to the mature spirit, " We will not let thee go."

Son of Man, Thou who hast come to tell our human childhood what it is to be full-grown, help us to gaze on *Thee !* Help us to look on Thee till we are changed into the same image ! We should like, we children of time, to be impregnated with the belief that the object of being full-grown is not to do what one likes but to learn the *bending* of the will. We should like to be inspired with the thought that the highest standard of manhood is not empire but service, not independence but brotherhood, not self-will but self-surrender. *That* is Thine image, O Son of Man ; let me grow up to Thee ! Destroy my childhood's ideal of a false manhood ! Destroy my admiration of self-will !—Thy mission was to do the will of Thy Father. Destroy my admiration of masterfulness ! —Thy mission was to minister. Destroy my admiration of those who say, " I do not care " !— on Thee were the cares of a world. Destroy my admiration of an immovable heart !—Thou hast wept over Jerusalem and over Bethany. Destroy my admiration of solitary grandeur !—Thou hast prayed that all may be one with Thyself. Teach me the manliness of ministration, the heroism of helpfulness, the sovereignty of serving, the lordship

of loneliness, the kinghood of compassion, the strength of stooping, the sceptre of unselfishness, the crown of crucifixion, the empire expressed in the epitaph, "He saved others; himself he cannot save!" Then shall I know what it is to be a man.

The Lesson of Siloam

"He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay and said, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam. He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."—JOHN IX. 6, 7.

EVEN in the unique Gospel of Christ the cure of this blind man is a unique thing. There is to my mind a peculiarity about it which separates it from every other work of Jesus. The singular feature is not the anointing of the eyes with clay, for the clay was after all administered by the Master's hand. But the remarkable thing is that Jesus sends the man away from *Himself* to be cured, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." It is not in coming from the hands of Jesus but in coming from the waters of Siloam that the scales fall from his eyes. The waters of Siloam had nothing to do with it; yet Christ wishes these earthly fountains to get the credit of His own work. It is not the use of means that strikes us, but the fact that the means are employed by a subordinate agency which has no immediate contact with the Great Healer. Why did Christ on this occasion credit another agency with His own work? I think it was to tell the world that His

cures should in future be committed to commonplace influences. Remember, this was His last miraculous healing of disease. Could anything be more appropriate than to indicate the point of transition to the new era! Was it not equivalent to saying, "In future my work for you will be taken by the ophthalmist; learn to see in the ophthalmist a power which I have ordained"! Our Lord wishes us to feel that it is by His sending, by His design, by His Gospel, that secular streams have acquired their healing strength. His latest cure of disease is a transition from grace to nature. "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam; use at my command the materials which earth provides. Hitherto I have healed with my own hand; henceforth I *send* to be healed. I send dimmed eyes to the oculist, curtained ears to the aurist, broken limbs to the surgeon, fevered pulses to the infirmary, diseased organs to the hospital, fading strength to the summer breezes. I commit my feeding to the economist, my healing to the physician, my cleansing to the pastor, my enlightening to the schoolmaster, my charity to the philanthropist, my fallen ones to the district visitor, my care of children to the mothers in Israel. This is the bequeathing of my last will and testament."

Lord, let me carry into modern life the symbol of Thy latest cure! I have been sent from Thy presence to the pool of Siloam—the stream of natural forces. Never let me forget that it is *Thy* sending! Never any more let me call Siloam secular! All my modern springs of healing have issued from *Thee.* It is to Thee I owe man's ever-ripening anxiety for the welfare of the human frame. Men never nursed the body till they saw it glorified in Thy resurrection light. Thou hast magnified this house in which I dwell, and now it is a glory to sweep its rooms. It is since Thy coming that we have learned the art of mitigating pain. It is Thou that hast lit the night-lamp of the nursing home. It is Thou that hast brought the uniform for the infirmary ward. It is Thou that hast ensured shelter to the convalescent and comfort to the incurable. It is Thou whose outstretched arms have suggested an abode for the foundling. It is Thou that hast given us the house of refuge for the destitute. It is Thou that hast initiated our help to the superannuated and the aged. It is Thou that hast opened our sympathies to the toilworn and the weary. The pool of Siloam had little water in it till the rain descended from *Thee;* our springs have been nourished by the dayspring from on high.

The Secret of Christ's Easter Glory

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel."—2 Tim. II. 8.

I THINK the meaning of this passage has been lost from the want of italics. I take the emphatic clause to be, "from the *dead*." All admitted that Christ was "raised"; but there was a sect of heretics who denied that He was raised from the *dead*. Their theory was that at the foot of the Cross the Divine Christ flew away and left only the man Jesus to suffer. According to this view, the Lord's triumph lay in cheating His enemies; they thought they were crucifying the Messiah, whereas they were only crucifying the human life to which the Messiah had united Himself. By this theory these heretics thought they were honouring the Master. It seemed a grander thing to think that He had escaped dying than that He had been raised from death. Paul differs from them. He says, "Your Gospel is not mine; according to my Gospel, Jesus Christ was raised, not from the hour of peril, but from the grave

itself, and His triumph was not the evading but the vanquishing of death." Why does Paul deem it a greater triumph in Christ to have risen from the dead than to have escaped death? He would have answered, "Because the raising from the grave made Him cease to be local—broke the line of His earthly ancestry." He tells us that Christ was born the son of David—the scion of the royal race of a particular country. If the matter had ended there, Paul would have regretted the limitation. And he would have been right. If Jesus had been raised to Heaven without dying, He would have been to the world only the representative of royal blood in one of the ancient nations. But to rise from the dead was to be born anew—born, no longer from the Jewish diadem, but from the general dust. The life that came forth on Easter Morning was not a life from the seed of David. It had no more to do with David than with Cyrus or Solon. It had broken the connection with its past. Who shall declare its generation? Who shall say that it was descended from the tribe of Judah or even from the stock of Abraham? It was not. It was neither Jewish nor Greek nor Roman. It was a new life from an unprecedented stem—a life even without virgin mother—a life fresh from God. Partiality was

gone, nationality was gone, special Messiahship was gone. Christ had become a cosmopolitan possession, and the cosmopolitan Paul clapped his hands.

And shall not I, too, rejoice, O Lord! Shall I not be glad that the resurrection life has broken the limits of Thy birth-life! No longer need I think of Thee as a child of a royal earthly line; the breath with which Easter Morn inspired Thee accepts no human lineage. No longer need I view Thee as a son of Israel; the breath with which Easter Morn inspired Thee is above principalities and powers. No longer need I look up to Thee as the glorifier of a chosen people; the breath with which Easter Morn inspired Thee glorified the common dust. Thy birth at Bethlehem narrowed Thee; it swathed Thee in bands; it made Thee the Messiah of a special race, the reformer of a special time. But Thy birth on Easter Morn released Thee; it loosed Thy bonds; it set Thee free. No trammels of race enchained Thy resurrection life. The line of David faded; the tribe of Judah faded; the stock of Abraham faded. Palestine vanished from our view; temple services were swept from our sight; priest and Levite met our gaze no more. Before Thee stood man—man universal, man of all ages, man of all

climes. The bells of Bethlehem called the shepherds of Judah; but the bells of Easter call the sons of men. Thou art now neither Jew nor Gentile; Thou art human. We hail Thee no more as son of David but as Son of Man. We crown Thee no more as Israel's Messiah but as Humanity's Saviour. We worship Thee no more as the ruler of the seed of Jacob but as the Judge and Arbiter of the Kingdom of God.

The Place for Christian Asceticism

"Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life."—MATT. VII. 14.

Is, then, the religious life narrow? Our Lord does not say so; He says exactly the reverse—that it is only the entrance into it that is narrow. I have seen a commodious vehicle with a very narrow door; when once you got in you could travel with comfort over vast ground, but the getting in was a little embarrassing. You must not imagine that the straitenedness of which our Lord speaks lies in the vehicle; it lies outside the vehicle—in yourself. His thought, as I take it, might be expressed thus: "You are entering a chariot with boundless capacities for travel. The one obstacle is the getting in, and that obstacle lies in you. You have something in your hand which prevents you from finding the door wide enough; it is a mirror in which you see yourself reflected. You will never get through the aperture along with your mirror; it is too narrow for both of you together. Throw aside your self-reflector; break it; leave it

in fragments on the causeway; and, entering into the chariot free from encumbrances, you will journey over a limitless plain." That is in spirit what I understand Christ to mean. His motive is not the restraint but the enlargement of the soul. He has provided for it a conveyance with immense travelling powers; its name is Love, and its synonym is not narrowness, but wideness. Unfortunately, the soul has a mirror whose name is Selfishness; it dandles that mirror, it will not let it go. But if the soul would enter the chariot it *must* let the mirror go. The door is big enough for itself alone, but not big enough for the accompaniment of its looking-glass. If it would enjoy the chariot it must sacrifice the looking-glass. In the interest of wide locomotion, in the interest of extensive sight-seeing, in the interest of reaching a road from which all barriers will be removed, the mirror must be left behind. That must be crucified which narrows me; that must be sacrificed which impedes me; that must be amputated which prevents me from soaring on the wing.

Thou, who art complaining of the restraints of Christianity, I would ask you one question: To whom are the flowers of life denied? Is it to thee? No, it is to thy mirror. Thou lookest in the glass and sayest to thine own image, "How grand it

would be to have the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; how honoured thou wouldst be, how lauded thou wouldst be, how attractive thou wouldst be; no other would be equal to thyself in all the earth!" And God says, "Thou art asking the kingdoms for thy mirror—for thine own glory; that is sin, that is sacrilege; thy gate must be straitened, thy way must be narrowed." Wherefore, my brother, does thy God so speak? Is it because the flowers would make thee wicked? Nay, it is because thou wouldst make the flowers wicked. The egotism of thy touch would pollute them. Wealth is not bad till it glorifies thy mirror, till thou sayest with triumph, "I am exalted above my fellows." God would fain redeem thee from finding wealth a corruption. God would make wealth to thee a good thing. He would make thee fit to leave the desert and come into the city. He would make possible to thee the use of earthly gems. The world can be thine when thou art Christ's—when thou lovest not self but man. Are thy life-roses superior to those of others; view it not with triumph, but with pain! Rest not till thou hast shared thy roses! Haste to distribute thy gold! Be eager to diffuse thy treasures! Let thy superiority oppress thee! Let thine exclusive privilege torture thee! Let thy

height above thy brother humble thee! Let thy larger share be a burden on thy heart and give thee no sleep till thou hast equalised thy possession! The world shall itself become thy Christian chariot when thy mirror has been broken.

The Heart's Obstruction to the Hearer

"They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage."—Ex. vi. 9.

It is not always the fault of a *preacher* that his message does not go home. We sometimes say that a minister is speaking above the heads of his audience; if so, he is in error. But there is another possibility of failure, and one for which he is not to blame; he may speak above the *hearts* of his audience. His message may be as clear as crystal, as eloquent as Demosthenes, and as beautiful as "the feet upon the mountains," and yet it may fall utterly flat because the spirits of the *hearer* are flat. This latter case is the case before us. "They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage." There never was a better preacher, there never was a more joyous message; but there was a weight at the heart of the hearer. There was a stone at the door of the sepulchre which prevented the voice

from penetrating inside. You will observe, there were two impediments in the heart—a positive and a negative barrier—a sense of anguish and a sense of bondage. These often exist separately. There are some who are the victims of a definite sorrow; they have a special cause of grief which blocks the door of the heart and will let no message of comfort enter in. There are others, again, who, without being able to point to a special sorrow, are simply conscious of a chain about the spirit; they have an oppression all round, a nameless weight which will not let them soar. I know not which is more deterrent to a message — the anguish or the bondage — the poignant grief in a single spot or the dull pain all over. Either is incompatible with the hearing of a Sermon on the Mount.

But how shall I get rid of these, O my Father! Can I say to my sad spirit, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry"! I cannot. No human heart in the days of its chaos can give the command to *itself*, "Let there be light!" How, then, shall I lift the stone from the door of the sepulchre, that the angel of peace may enter in! Can I say it is summer when it is winter! No, my Father, Thou wouldst not have me say that. But Thou wouldst have me forget, not *the* winter,

but *my* winter. Thou wouldst have me remember that there are thousands like me, thousands feeling the same anguish, thousands bearing the same bondage. Thou wouldst not bid me ignore the night, but Thou wouldst have me remember that I watch not there *alone.* Is Peter weighted in the Garden; Thou wouldst have him call to mind that James and John are also there. Thou wouldst have him watch for one hour by the burden of James and John. Thou wouldst have him bury his own beneath the soil till he has returned from his mission of sympathy. Thou wouldst have him forget awhile the place where it was lying. Instead of crying, "Who shall support me now upon life's stormy sea!" Thou wouldst have him say, "Who now shall make James a son of thunder!"—"Who now shall pillow John upon a bosom of rest!" Then after the night watches Thou wouldst have him go back to disinter his burden. Thou wouldst have him turn up the soil to uncover the spot of the burial. He will cry, "My burden has been stolen in the night; the place where I laid it is vacant; I left it here, and it is here no more; come, see the place where my grief lay!" So, my Father, shall he find rest—rest in Thy love. Thy self-forgetfulness will make him free. Thy Cross will crucify his

pain. Thy burden will break his yoke. Thy sorrow will still his complaining. He will lose his own suffering in fellowship with Thine; he whom the Lamb leads to sympathetic fountains gets all tears wiped from the eyes.

The Significance of the Burial of Moses

"And God buried him in a valley of the land of Moab; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day."—DEUT. XXXIV. 6.

I HAVE often put to myself the question: Suppose this fragment of the Bible had been lost, should we drop any flower from the garland of revelation? I think we should. I think there is one thing revealed here which is quite unique and which is planted here alone; I mean the fact that there is such a thing as burial by *God*. Some of the deepest distresses of bereavement come from the denial of funeral rites. Where the body is buried in the mine, where the body is engulfed in the sea, where the body is stretched on the battle-field indistinguishable amid the mutilated slain, there is a deeper tone added to the heart's knell. It is a note which Christianity has rather increased than diminished, for the doctrine of resurrection has consecrated the body and made its very dust dear. To such a state of mind what comfort this passage brings! Here is an explorer lost in the mountain snow. His friends know he is dead;

and it adds to their pain that no human lips have consecrated his dust. And to them there comes this voice: Ye that weep for the unfound dead, ye that lament the burial rites denied, know ye not that there are graves which are consecrated by God alone! Where the prayer is breathed not, where the Book is opened not, where the wreath is planted not, where the human tear is shed not, there may be a burial of unsullied solemnity—a burial by the hand of your Father. There are consecrated graves where priest never stood, where mourner never knelt, where tear never fell. There are spots hallowed by your Father which to you are barren ground. God's acre is larger than the churchyard. Out on yon bleak hillside He wrapped your friend to rest in a mantle of spotless snow. Is not that bleak hillside God's acre evermore! Is it not as holy to you as if you had brought sweet spices to the tomb! It has no chant but the winds, no book but the solemn silence, no bell but some wild bird's note, no wreath but the wreath of snow; yet there is no more sacred spot in all the diocese of God.

My soul, hast thou pondered this picture of God's care for the human dust! There is no brighter picture in the Bible. I have heard thee ask, Where does the Old Testament teach

immortality? I have seen thee search the records for traces of the resurrection life. Thou hast stood beside the ascending Enoch. Thou hast watched the disappearing Elijah. Thou hast listened to the song of the psalmist, "Thou wilt receive me into glory." Thou hast gazed upon the spectre of the dead Samuel rising from the grave to renovate the kingdom. But methinks all these pale before one neglected incident—the solicitude of the Father for the burial of a human body. "*God* buried him." Thinkest thou He would have cared for the inanimate clay if He care not for *thee!* Thinkest thou He would have prepared a place for the casket if He had no place for the gem! Why should He hold the dust of Moses dear if He had obliterated his *spirit!* Why cherish the garment if He had chilled the life! Why preserve the ring if He had pulverised the hand! Why water the ground if He had withered the flower! Why keep the dwelling if He had killed the tenant! Why crown the lifeless form if He had crushed the living man! O my soul, when Enoch grows pale to thy sight, when Elijah fades from thine eyes, when the song of the psalmist is faint in thine ear, when the image of Samuel refuses to rise, come and attend the funeral of Moses!

The Necessity of Selflessness to Charity

"Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward."—Isa. lviii. 8.

I think this passage has quite a different meaning from another on which I have elsewhere commented—"The God of Israel will be your rearward." This latter passage signifies that God will retrieve our past. But the words now before us are to my mind not a promise but a command. This whole chapter is an exhortation to charity. The prophet is urging men to deeds of ministration—to sympathy with the poor, compassion for the sorrowful, help for the needy. He says that such a life of sacrifice is of more value than the keeping of sacred days or the attendance at holy festivals. But he says that even this life of sacrifice will have no value unless it is sought for its own sake—that is to say, for the sake of the sufferer. Let me try to paraphrase his words: "When you go out on your mission of charity, take care that you are guided by only one motive —the goodness of the cause. Let nothing be in

front of you but the righteousness of the act. It is quite true that there will come to you an outward recompense; the glory of the Lord will ultimately shine upon yourself. But take heed that you keep that thought in the background. Do not think of the glory with which God will recompense you. Let that glory be to you in the rear—a thing not before your eyes. Let the only thing before your eyes be the cause of righteousness, the duty to minister, the need to succour man; 'Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.'" That is what I understand the prophet to mean. In the life for God there is an invitation to personal sacrifice and there is a promise of personal glory. But the prophet tells us to put the promise behind our back until we have finished the sacrifice. He bids us forget the glory until we have surrendered the life. He says: "There is joy in heaven to a sacrificial soul; but I would not have that soul keep the joy of heaven before its eyes. I would have it, when it serves the beggar, forget the golden streets and the pearly gates and the unsetting suns and the crystal rivers and the living fountains. I would have it remember only the claims of love. I would have it remember only the cries of the perishing and the groans of

the wounded and the deep inarticulate longings of those who are too feeble to cry; let the glory of the Lord be my rearward."

Lord, often have I thought of these words of Thine, "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed." Strange has it seemed to me that the glory has come so late. I have asked, Why didst Thou not reveal it at the beginning? If I had seen the heavenly glory, would it not have helped me in the levelling of the mountains, in the elevating of the valleys, in the straightening of the crooked and the smoothing of the rough?—so I inquired in the olden time. But now, my Father, it is all clear to me. I see why Thou hast placed the glory in the rear; I see why Thou hast hid the personal gain. If I had seen my gain, the labour might have been accelerated; but it would have been less a labour of love. It would have been prompted less by my brother's cry than by my own crown. My hands would have moved to the music of my own accompaniment, not to the dirge of the needy. Thou hast hid the gold that I may hear the groan. Thou hast veiled the sun that I may catch the sigh. Thou hast hushed the

song that I may pierce the silence. Thou hast clouded the brightness that I may lift the burden. Thou hast withheld the plaudits that I may work only for the poor. Thou hast dimmed my star that I may face my brother's storm. Thou hast concealed Thy throne of power that my heart's motive may be the throb of pity. I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast placed Thy glory in the rear.

How to Register Believers

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness."—ROMANS X. 10.

I HAVE often figured to myself the idea of an ordained census of religious opinion; it has at times seemed to me an adequate means of arriving at the present position of spiritual faith. But there is one difficulty which has deeply struck me. It is very easy to register the number of Church members and their distribution among the different Churches, because a man cannot both be and not be the member of a Church at the same time. But when you come to ask whether a man is theist or agnostic, pietist or sceptic, believer or doubter, it is a very difficult thing even for himself to answer. And the reason is that he may at one and the same time be both the one and the other. For, there are two roads to belief—the intellect and the heart; and many a man loses his way by the former who finds it by the latter. It is not alone of my belief in God that this is true; it is as true of my belief in my brother.

There are people in this world known to me who might be surrounded by a chain of circumstantial evidence almost demonstrating crime and whom my intellect could not clear, yet of whose stainless integrity I should have no more doubt than of the light of the sun at noonday. In any argument in their favour I should have to own myself vanquished; yet my conviction of their innocence would remain without a cloud; the street which was a blind alley to the understanding would be to the heart a road into green fields. So may it be with your religion. Your understanding may be in the night when your heart is in the noon. Your intellect may be baffled by the clouds that environ your God; you may be numbered by the world among the sceptics; you may be counted with those that have denied the faith. Yet, could it enter the secret of your pavilion, that world might find you on your knees—pouring forth prayers with the simplicity of a little child. The world would say, "It is hypocrisy." It would be wrong; no man is a hypocrite before God. It is a simpler, truer explanation that comforts us. You have lost your way by one route and found it by another. The star hid by the house-tops has appeared again in the open. The Christ whom you recognised not on the road has been

made known to you at the evening meal. The knot which reason could not untie has been unwoven by the heart of love.

My brother, Paul says that God will judge thee not by the former but by the latter belief, "With the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness." Hast thou pondered the comfort of these words. Men ask thee if thou hast found Christ; and often thou sayest No when the answer should be Yes. Art thou one of the lost sheep? inquires the world. What should thine answer be in such a case as Paul suggests? Should it not be this. "I am a lost sheep on this road. I have never been able to find my way in this direction. I have always been landed in bewilderment, in fog, in perplexity; by the intellectual route I am ever wandered. But there is another route by which I always reach my goal—the route of the heart. Whenever I get on that road the fog vanishes, the perplexity disappears, and the towers of my Father's palace rise gleaming in the sun. When I am there, I am not a lost sheep any more. Why must the census be taken when I am on the way unsuited to me!—it is only on that path I have been numbered among the transgressors." Yes, my brother, and Paul would take thy census in another spot. He would have thee judged by

the heart. At the very moment when the world says "Lost" Paul cries "Found." In the very hour when the world deems thee wandered Paul writes "Reached home." In the very instant when the world inscribes on thee the title "A pilgrim of the night," Paul numbers thee in the book of life as "A son of the morning."

The Response of the Environment

"When Israel went out of Egypt, the mountains skipped like rams."—Ps. CXIV. 1, 4.

IT is said that man is affected by his environment. It is true; but it is equally true that man's environment is affected by *him*. We are influenced by the sights and sounds around us; but it is no less certain that the sights and sounds around us are influenced by *us*. In this passage we have an incident of the latter kind. When Israel went out of Egypt there was a change in her environment, "The mountains skipped." She transferred to the things around her the impression of her own joy. She was inwardly leaping and dancing, and, as in a mirror, she saw the mountains leaping and dancing too. Why the mountains? Why not the brooks, the streams, the rivers? Is not the idea of motion more suitable to these? Certainly; therefore the psalmist, because he was a poet, did not select them. He selected the most unlikely things—the mountains. The mountains naturally suggest anything but

dancing. They suggest immobility, steadfastness, iron determination to be affected by nothing. And that is just where the dramatic power of this poet comes in. He sees the joy of the soul infecting the most stolid objects in the world—the sober, grave, serious mountains. If *these* could be made to dance to the rhythm of the heart, no part of Nature could possibly remain unmoved. I regard it as a fine stroke of literary genius that, in seeking a partner for the dance of the spirit, the psalmist should have chosen, not the streams, but the mountains. He wants to show how utterly dependent is the aspect of Nature on the state of the heart—even where the aspect of Nature seems most fixed and stereotyped. He tells how in the joy of the spirit even the stable mountains cannot keep still to the eye of the beholder, but leap and bound and vibrate to the pulse of the gladdened soul. Have you not felt this power of joy over prosaic things. Have you not felt how cold has lost its chillness, how rain has lost its dreariness, how wind has lost its bitterness, when the heart was young. Have you not felt how the long way became short, how the rough road became smooth, how the muddy path became clean, when the heart was young. Have you not felt how the roar of

traffic made music, how the din of the city made merry, how the shriek of the railway train made laughter, when the heart was young. Oh, the psalmist was right when he said that when the soul is emancipated from its Egypt the very mountains leap.

Lord, Thou hast said, "I go to prepare a place for you." Yea, and the preparation must be rather in me than in the place. Any place will be joyous, if my heart be young. Rejuvenate my heart, O Lord, and the mountains will leap. When my heart grows old I get weary of localities; I migrate from spot to spot, I flit from flower to flower, I sigh for the wings of a dove to break the monotony of my rest. But that is because my heart is not leaping. If my heart would leap, everything would leap — the very mountains. It is not new objects I want; it is renewed joy in them. Give me back the joy of the waves, the laughter of the brooks, the singing of the streams! Give me back the sense of morning, the smile of Nature's greeting, the welcome from wood and field! Make the excursion what it used to be; make the holiday what it used to be; make the evening walk what it used to be! It is not the years that have stolen their charm; it is the friction of the heart. Revive the joy of

my heart, O Lord! Make my spirit young again! Restore my soul to freshness that the pastures may be green! Give me back the child's wonder, the boy's ardour, the youth's glamour! Replace, *within*, the rose that has withered! Rekindle the spring that has faded! Reanimate the hope that is vanished! Renew to October the promise made to April! Plant the burning bush amid the snows of Nebo! Give aspiration to my autumn, wings to my winter, songs to my sunset, expectancy to my evening light! Then shall the waves resound once more; then shall the mountains leap as they did at morning's glow.

The Permanence of Spirit in the Fleetingness of Nature

"They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; but Thou art the same."—Ps. CII. 26, 27.

THE sentiment of this passage is to my mind unique in literature. The common sentiment of men in looking on the face of nature is the contrary. You gaze upon a field which you trod in childhood; and almost with bitterness the thought comes over you, Why is matter so much more enduring than spirit! You think of the multitude who are dead since first you trod this field—this field which seems to stand as fresh and green as of yore. It is such a sentiment as this which Tennyson expresses when he makes the brook sing, "Men may come and men may go, but I go on for ever." It is such a sentiment as this which Byron expresses when he surveys the sea and cries, "Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow." It is such a sentiment as this which we all express when we speak of "the everlasting

hills"; we are contrasting the permanence of nature with the transitoriness of spirit. But in this outpouring of the psalmist we have exactly the opposite idea; here, nature is the perishable and spirit the permanent. He looks at the field, at the sea, at the hills, and cries, "They perish, but the great Spirit remaineth." It is the inversion of Tennyson's song—"Brooks may come and brooks may go, but soul goes on for ever." And there is no doubt, even from a literary point of view, that the psalmist is right. Even in this world the most abiding thing is a soul. The brook could never say "I," because it does not remain the same brook for two minutes. So far from going on for ever, it needs to be renewed every instant. The drops are new each moment. They only seem the same because my spirit is the same. It is my *spirit* which says "I"—not the brook. The psalmist saw this. He saw that the permanence attributed to each natural form is an illusion cast by the shadow of the soul's own immortality. The bloom of the flower is not a single bloom; it is a momentarily repeated colour. The water of the stream is not a single water; it is an ever-renewed liquid. The strength of the mountain is not a single strength; it is a constantly-replenished force coming from the play

of atoms. The spirit alone abides; the spirit alone says "I."

O Thou Divine Spirit, whose breath has become *my* spirit, the secret of my permanence is Thy life within me. I am the one stable thing in a fleeting universe. All my vestures are being changed from hour to hour. The body I have in youth is not the body I had when a child; not one trace of the old garment remains. Yet my spirit remains; the tabernacle has vanished, but I go on for ever. Why? What is that which is permanent within me after I have lost every vestige of my garment? It is Thou, O Lord. That which I call my soul is a breath from Thee. It is a part of Thyself. It is a spray-drop from Thine ocean; it is a spark from Thy fire. Many, when they address Thee, look up; *I* look *in*. There are some to whom Thou art most mirrored in the sunbeam; to me Thou art most deeply reflected in the soul. There is one thing which in the sunbeam I cannot see—Thy permanence. I can see there Thy brightness, Thy joy, Thy glory—but not Thy permanence. I never can see *that* till I look into my soul. The brook has no continuous song; its chatterings are but the accumulated voices of dying myriads of drops extinguished to make room for more. But by the side of the brook my soul can sing a real

song, a continuous song, a song that persists while the atoms are vanishing. By the side of the brook my soul can live while the waters die, my heart can beat while the globules fall, my steps can stray while the myriad drops expire. Therefore it is *within* that I see the vision of Thine immortality. It is *within* that I read the record of Thy Life Eternal. It is *within* that I seek a symbol of Thine Everlasting Day. I address my *spirit* when I say to Thee, "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure."

The Religious Type of Peter

"Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation."—2 PETER III. 15.

THE salvation of the soul takes different forms according to the difference of the character. In the New Testament epistles it has, I think, assumed four different forms, represented respectively by James, Paul, John, and Peter. With James salvation is reached by work—it comes primarily through the hand. With Paul it is reached by light—it comes in a flash from heaven appealing to the eye. With John it is reached by love—it speaks originally to the heart. With Peter it is different from any of these. In his view it is reached by a series of buffetings—by repeated falls and repeated forgivenesses—by what he calls "the longsuffering of God." All these different standpoints have come from the separate experiences of the men. James was long a Jew before he became a Christian, and therefore he was always prone to prefer work to sentiment. Paul was illuminated by an intellectual light, and

therefore he aspired "to comprehend with all saints." John was the disciple of love, and therefore he studied with his heart. But the most appropriate parallel of all is that of Peter. To him salvation or the power of walking came by repeated falls and repeated liftings from the ground—in other words, by the longsuffering of God. He receives Christ's blessing in the morning, and in the evening gets His stern rebuke. One hour he is on the mountain, and the next under a cloud. To-day he is voyaging bravely, and to-morrow he is crying, "Save me; I perish!" Now he is vowing deathless devotion to Jesus, and anon he is proclaiming, "I know not the man." I do not wonder that to him salvation became equivalent to the longsuffering of God. And I do think that Peter represents the larger class. There are earnest workers among us like James. There are intellectual seers among us like Paul. There are devotees of the heart among us like John. But I think the large majority among us are men with whom it is neither abiding light nor abiding darkness—men who are falling to-day and rising to-morrow—men on whose tombstone the only appropriate words would be, "Saved by the longsuffering of God."

Lord, teach me my brotherhood with the *Peters* of this world! I am always ready to claim it with Paul, with John, even with James; but I am slow to claim it with Peter. When I see a man with a light in his soul I behold an evidence of Thy communion. When I meet a man with love in his heart I behold an evidence of Thy communion. When I find a man with Christian work on his hands I behold an evidence of Thy communion. But when I see a man in struggle with life's winds and waves, when I behold him alternately rising and falling—to-day breasting the billows and to-morrow sinking in the depths, I say, "This is one whose Christian life is not yet begun." Teach me my mistake, O Father! Teach me that those in conflict are themselves in the way of salvation! Give me a hand of fellowship for the man of many falls! It is easy for me to have fellowship with light and love and working. But with the man who is waited for—whose light is fitful, whose love is wavering, whose working is spasmodic, I have not been taught to claim kindred. Let this be Thy lesson for me to-day, O Lord! Let me admit to Thy communion the storm-tossed souls, the sinking souls, the souls that have failed to walk upon life's sea! Let me admit to Thy communion the minds

whose vision of glory has been clouded, who have been unable to fix their tabernacle upon a height! Let me admit to Thy communion the spirits that have wrecked brave resolves—that have violated in the market-place the pledges they have made in the garden! Let me admit to Thy communion the lives that have not yet learned the glory of the Cross—that shrink from following up the Dolorous Way! Let me admit to Thy communion those who have kept Thee long waiting, whose progress has been slow, whose back-turns have been many! for Thy longsuffering is itself salvation, and until Thou hast blessed Peter, Thou wilt not let him go.

The Characteristic of St. John

"These are written, that believing ye might have life through His name."—JOHN XX. 21.

I DO not think we mark sufficiently the traces of autobiography in the sacred writers. The favourite word of John is "life." He dwells upon it more than on any other conception. And it seems to me that there is great appropriateness in the selection. To the men of his generation he was essentially the man of life. He had so much vitality about him that his contemporaries said he would never die. He says himself that if a man had in him the spirit of Christ he would have in him the spirit of immortal youth, or what he calls Eternal Life. Where did he get that conception? From his own experience. He felt every morning as if he were born afresh into the world. He felt something within him like the springing up of living waters. Nay, he felt as if he had already passed the rubicon of death and had even now entered the world of the immortals. I think if you and I had met St. John the thing that would

have impressed us above all other things would have been the vitality of his spirit. We see this manifestation exhibited in some of our fellow-men; there are those whom we describe as "full of life." And if you ask the source of this life you will find that in every case it is originated by something outside. John says that in his case the flow of vitality came from the name of Jesus. The flow of vitality always comes from a human interest, and it is generally awakened by a name. The names "fraternity," "liberty," "equality," stimulated the French Revolution—a vital force that shook the world. Many a heart has been vitalised by a name. You sit in a crowded drawing-room and hear a buzz of inarticulate voices. Suddenly, a voice not louder than the rest becomes articulate; it pronounces a name, a name you love; it says, mentioning that name, "Have you heard he is coming home?" Before that name broke upon your ear you were listless, apathetic, dead. But when you heard the prophecy of its owner's advent, a new life rose within you. The eye sparkled; the cheek mantled; the pulse quickened; the room became radiant; the languor vanished; the hours received wings. Even such to the beloved disciple was the mention of the name of Jesus. It made him young again

—nay, rather it kept him from ever growing old. It constituted him an evergreen; it gave him life eternal. It not only prolonged his years; it made them perpetual spring — elastic with energy, bounding with hope, buoyant with the promise of to-morrow. It retained within him the heart of a child.

Lord, I often speak of the needs of life. Teach me that the greatest need in life is life more abundant! When my brother man gets wealth I often say, "I hope he will have long life to enjoy it." Teach me that what he needs for its enjoyment is not length, but amount, of life! I complain sometimes that things are not as they were in the days of my youth—that the grass is less verdant, the birds less vocal, the waves less joyous. Teach me that the change is from within —in the decline of youth itself! Teach me that if I could get back the spirit of youth the birds would sing the songs of Bethlehem and the fields would wear the flowers of Eden! Teach me that I *may* get back my youth—that love has no seasons, and that love can make me young! I shall be young once more when I get back the sensation of one name sounding above every name in the world's crowded room. I *may* have that sensation, O my Lord; the old man of Patmos had

it and it made April of his November. My heart, like his, may tremble with joy at the sound of a name—Thy Name. My spirit, like his, may leap at the sense of a presence—Thy presence. My step, like his, may bound at the tread of a coming —Thy coming. My eye, like his, may see visions in the prospect of a glory—Thy glory. My frame, like his, may cast off ailments in the expectancy of a meeting—Thy meeting. Even so come, Lord Jesus!

The First Place of God's Revelation

"God hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory in the face of Jesus Christ."—2 Cor. iv. 6.

"God hath shined in our hearts." What a strange place to shine in, considering the object in view! What is the object in view? It is to show the light in the face of Christ. Should we not, then, have expected that the face of Christ would have been the entire source of the illumination? Should we not have looked for the words to have run thus: "God hath shined in the face of Christ to give the light of His glory to the *heart*"? If the light is in Christ's face, should it not *come* from the face; what has the poor heart of man to do with the revelation of God's glory? Much, my brother. There can be no revelation to a human heart unless that heart is already on the line of the revelation. Dissimilar natures cannot be mutually revealed. Of all men known to me Paul is the most impressed with this. He says, "No man can know the things of a man but the spirit of a man." He means that a dog cannot

know the things of a man, that the human alone can recognise the human. He says, again, that no seeing of the eye, nor hearing of the ear, can reveal the things of the spirit, that they can only enter a *kindred* spirit. And this explains what I have often wondered at—why Paul, in speaking of his conversion, says, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." Why "*in* me"? I thought it was an outward light that illuminated him. I should have expected Paul to say, "It pleased God to reveal His Son *to* me." But Paul knew better. He knew well that no outward light could reveal anything unless there was a corresponding light already in his soul. Listen!—the Spirit must precede the Son. Did not our Lord Himself tell Peter that he never would have recognised His greatness by any outward vision.—"Flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father." Why do some see Jesus on the mount, and others only see Him on the plain? His outward shining is to both the same; the difference lies in the greeting of the spirit. There are hearts which are already strewn with palm leaves for the feet of the Son of Man. The beauty which kindles me is ever kindled from within. The sublimity of night is in my *soul.* The message of wood and field is beforehand in my *mind.*

Nature only speaks to me when my heart translates its language. The lark will not carol when the heart has care, the brook will not babble when the heart is burdened, the morn will not smile when the heart is smitten ; for the song of the lark is *my* song, the brightness of the brook is *my* brightness, the smile of the morn is the laughter of *my* soul.

O Thou who hast illumined the face of Thy Christ, illumine my heart to see it ! In vain shall He come to Galilee if He does not come to my soul ! How shall I see Him as He is if I am not like Him ! How shall His treasures be borne into my spirit if there is no bridge of sympathy between Him and me ! Build that bridge, O Lord ! I cannot read the expression of love on a face except there be love within me. Put love within me, O my Father ! Neither sunlight nor moonlight nor starlight can reveal to me the portrait of Thy Christ ; only heart-light can. Shine in my heart that I may see its glory ! Let me feel beforehand that the Christ-life is the heroic life ! Inspire me with the ideal ere I meet the reality ! Kindle me with the love of kindness ! Stir me with the admiration of sympathy ! Haunt me with the beauty of holiness ! Teach me the power of peacemaking, the strength of

sacrifice, the bravery of bending, the courage of cross-bearing, the devotedness of self-denial, the majesty of mercy, the royalty of restrained passion, the sceptre of silence, the heroism of a chosen humility! Then shall the threshold of my heart be lighted for the Master's coming; and by that light on the threshold I shall meet Him at the door; and at the very first sight of His kindred countenance I shall have knowledge of His glory.

God's Deepest Horror in Sin

"He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul."—PROVERBS VIII. 36.

THIS is not the common mode of thinking about sin. The common mode is to regard God's horror of sin as resulting from a sense of injury to Himself. Here, on the contrary, the Divine horror of sin is said to consist in the fact that it is an injury to *me*. A father says to a child, "Do not go near the fire while I am out; if you do, I shall be very angry." The child probably thinks that his anger will lie in the fact of being disobeyed It will not lie there at all; it will be stirred purely by the fear that in its act of disobedience the child may have hurt itself. And if he finds that the child *has* hurt itself, his anger will be transmuted into the most intense pain. Now, take what we call *hell*-fire. The Heavenly Father cries to His children, "I command you not to go near it lest you get scorched." What is the ground of that command? Is it the wish to exercise a Divine authority? No; startling as it may seem,

it is the wish to avert a Divine fear. You have heard the expression, "The fear of the Lord." When I am exhorted to cultivate the fear of the Lord, what does that mean? It means that I am to get into my heart that fear which dwells in the heart of God, that I am to have for my brother the same dread which the Heavenly Father has for His children. The fear of the Lord is the fear that His sons and daughters will touch the fire. If there were not that dread in the heart of the All-Father, the commands of Sinai would never have been issued. You speak of God's sovereign decrees. God has no sovereign decrees; God's decrees are all paternal. The decrees of a despot are meant to clip the subject's wings; those of the Father are meant to expand the wings. Why are you forbidden to hate? Because hatred cramps the soul. Why are you forbidden to be jealous? Because jealousy narrows the soul. Why are you forbidden to be selfish? Because selfishness locks the soul. Why are you commanded to love? Because love is liberty. Why are you commanded to pity? Because pity is power. Why are you commanded to sympathise? Because sympathy is the heart's soaring. The commands of your Father break the cage and set you free. He prescribes faith that

you may fly. He offers grace that you may grow. He enjoins kindness that you may kindle. He exacts brotherhood that you may bloom. He requires service that you may sing. He invites prayer that you may prophesy. Not in His honour, but in yours, does He ask the homage of your heart; the Father has no glory but the enlargement of His child.

Lord, make me partaker of Thy fear—the fear that the children may get hurt in the great fire! It was the fear of Thy Son in Gethsemane when He poured forth His soul in strong crying and tears. Let me work together with Thee in keeping back the children from the fire! May we labour in common, Thou and I, for this glorious end! Let me feel what Thou feelest—not the disobedience, but the danger! Be mine Thy pain, O Lord—the pain for the sinner! Teach me the suicide of sin! Teach me that Magdalene mars her own flower—not Thine! Teach me that the judgment on transgression is not a father's anger, but a father's grief! Remind me *when* it was that Thy Son said, "Now is the judgment of this world"—that it was when His own heart was crucified by the creature's pain! Reveal to me, nay, repeat in me, the mystery of Calvary! Let me bear with Thee, with Thy Christ, the burdens

of the bad! Impress me with their poverty! Weight me with their weariness! Load me with their self-loathing! Rack me with their remorse! Toss me with their tempests! Haunt me with their hunger! Scorch me with the soreness of their flame! I am told they have violated Thy justice; Thy deepest sorrow is that they have been unjust to themselves—they have "wronged their own souls."

Sin Conquered by Loveliness

"He was manifested to take away our sins."—1 John iii. 5.

Manifested to take away sin! If we met these words for the first time, we should think them very strange. They sound as if one said, "A picture was exhibited to remove a pestilence." The agency seems extremely soft for the iron task assigned to it. We could understand the appropriateness of other agencies. We could understand why it should be said, "Repressive laws were made to take away sin." We could understand the propriety of the statement, "Drastic penalties were enacted to take away sin." We could understand the logic of the averment, "A life of asceticism was prescribed to take away sin." But a manifestation, an exhibition, a painting, a mere showing of something—that seems a poor weapon to wield against so deadly a foe. Yet, examine your own experience and you will find St. John is right. What is it which cures the greatest number of sins in this world?

Is it law? No. Is it penalty? No. Is it the withdrawal of outward temptation? No. It is the sight of something beautiful, or I should rather say, the sight of some one beautiful. What I need is not a restraining influence; it is an expanding influence. I require, not a stone laid at the door of the heart, but a star lit in the dome of the heavens. I shall never lose my attraction for sin by being contracted in the opportunity for it. What I want is a counter-attraction—a counter-love. Sin is a state of love. It is the love of a person—myself. You can only counterbalance that on the homœopathic principle—by opposing to it another kind of love. I must see a more admirable being than myself. My heart, which has been captivated by the charm of my own personality, must be taken prisoner by a purer personality. We sometimes say of a self-conscious man, "He needs to get his wings clipped." No; what he needs is to get his wings extended. He is not too ambitious; he is too humble. He must be made to soar higher. This world must not lose its attraction for him; it must gain more attraction. He has been enchanted by a stagnant pool. How is he to be disenchanted? By drying up the pool? No; that would not make him love it less; it would still be

undried in memory. If you want to disenchant him, you must show him the sea—with its laughing waves, with its bounding waters, with its pulses of leaping life. So shall the stagnancy be put to shame; so shall he learn that he was worshipping a dead thing.

O Thou who art a portion of this world and yet fairer than the children of men, I fly to *Thee*. I do not seek to learn purity by counting the impurities in the pool; I fly to Thee. I stand by the ocean of Thy love and listen to its music; and the old ideal dies, and all things are made new. It is not by Thy precepts I am purified; it is by Thyself. It is not by coming to hate the world; it is by finding a new beauty in the world—Thy beauty. There has been no outward shattering of myself; there has been simply a gaze at *Thee*. My riches have not taken wings, but my soul has. I have not lost avarice by losing gold, but by gaining flowers of paradise. I have not abandoned intemperance through failing health, but by getting health more abundantly. I have not dulled temptation by ceasing to care for earth, but by putting on a larger care—care for Thee. My burdens have fallen at the vision of Thy beauty. My vanities have faded at the sight of Thy vesture. My follies have fled from the brightness

of Thy face. My selfishness has withered in the light of Thy smile. My hardness has melted in the warmth of Thy heart. My passion has been lulled by the calm of Thy presence. I have lost sight of the wilderness by gazing on the New Jerusalem; Thou Altogether Lovely, I am saved by Thee.

The Principle of Christ's Selection

"Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. And they call the blind man, saying unto him, Be of good comfort, rise; He calleth thee."—MARK X. 49.

YOU will observe, Jesus called the blind man while he was yet in his blindness. This is the most significant and the most suggestive feature of the narrative. He does not exact light as the condition of the man's coming; He calls him with the night still hanging round him, with the burden still unlifted, with the barrier still unremoved. That remains to this day the law of Christ's kingdom—though there are many of His ministers who need to learn it. We all feel the value and the glory of religious light; but it is a great mistake to imagine that religious light is essential to a man's call. We have come to look upon the intellectual perplexities of a human soul as a sign that this soul is unconverted. They are no such sign. This man in the streets of Jericho is a typical case. The typical thing about him is not that he regains his sight, but that he comes to

Christ *before* he has regained his sight. The thing that makes him spiritually fit for the kingdom of God is not his vision of the light but his contact with Jesus. The moral would to my mind have been equally effective *without* the cure. All the men in the streets of Jericho were saying, "This man's darkness proves him to be outside the kingdom of God." Jesus says, "I will refute that belief; bring the man to me in his present state of dilapidation; bring him with the burden unrelieved and the night unbroken, and even thus I will let him in." And that is Christ's message to the men of England as well as to the men of Jericho. We say, "There are those among us whose spiritual knowledge is very defective; we will take care not to admit them to Christ's table." Christ says, "If you can get them into contact with myself, you can *postpone* their spiritual knowledge; if you can inspire personal love, you can let them wait for light; bring them to me." My Christ is the only Master that has membership for the *benighted.* All others cry, "Get your sight and come." He says, "Come, and get your sight." Moses asks cleansing; Socrates desires knowledge; Plato needs philosophy; Buddha seeks worldly renunciation; Confucius demands orderly life; John Baptist requires the fruits of

repentance. But Christ will accept the hearing of a voice in the night. He does not ask preliminary morning. He does not ask antecedent vision. He does not ask, for the opening miles, a knowledge of the way. He only appeals to the ear; He says, "Come."

O Thou who alone hast called the sons of night, unto whom shall we go but unto Thee! All other masters keep back the white robe till we are able to see it—Moses, Socrates, Plato, Confucius, Buddha, the baptist John. But Thou hast put the white robe on us while yet we are blind. Thou hast clothed us in a garment of which we cannot yet see the beauty—the garment of Thine own righteousness. Thou hast painted us in Thy heart not as we are but as we shall be. Thou hast dressed us in the colours of a sun on which our eyes have never gazed. The light in which we stand before Thee is the light of to-morrow. It is not our rags Thou beholdest, but our future radiance. There is photographed in Thy rays, not the man that is, but the man that is to be. Thou seest Peter without his timidity, John without his exclusiveness, James without his prosaicness, Thomas without his scepticism, Nicodemus without his materialism, Paul without his legalism, Martha without her philistinism, Magdalene

without her sevenfold temptation. Thou waitest not for our amendment; the light by which Thou seest us is not ours, but Thine. Thou callest us to our labour and our ladenness, to our burden and our blindness, to our withering and our weakness. Thou speakest not to our present nobleness but to our present need; in the sense of that need, we come.

The True Outlook for Faith

"Righteousness shall go before Him."—Ps. LXXXV. 13.

WHY should the psalmist say that God's righteousness "goes before Him"; why should he not have written, "His righteousness will be seen as He is passing by"? Because this latter would not be true. It is not as God passes that His righteousness is seen. The idea I take to be that we cannot expect to understand the goodness of God until His plan has been fully unfolded. We feel His action to-day; we shall only learn its wisdom to-morrow. We see the storing of vegetable matter in the depths of the earth; we say, "To what purpose is this waste!" By-and-by it is dug up for coal; it becomes the source of household fires and the means of swift locomotion. We find that in its buried state it has been waiting to be the minister to human civilisation, and we say to God, "Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off—Thou hast made provision in advance." We see a man of grand powers

immured in a wilderness; we say again, "To what purpose is this waste!" By-and-by the wilderness becomes a thoroughfare, and the solitude is broken. We find that in his buried state the man has been waiting for the hour of a great destiny, and we cry to God, "The completed years have praised Thee." We see the Priest of human souls crucified by the world; we say once more, "To what purpose is this waste!" By-and-by that cross becomes His glory, His kingdom, His crown. We find that in His buried state He has redeemed the world, and we cry to God, "The fulness of the time has justified Thee." In all these acts the righteousness of God has gone before Him. It has not been seen while He was passing by. The thing seen was something apparently adverse to God—something which seemed to derogate from His providence. But the object present to the Divine eye was always the future. It rested not on the buried vegetation but on the coming coalfield, not on the deserted place but on the desert made populous, not on the death in humiliation but on the days when such humiliation should be deemed the climax of glory. To see the righteousness of God you must see Him by to-morrow's light.

Lord, to me Thy deeds are often in the cloud.

Help me at these times to look towards the coming day! I sometimes gaze at the universe and say, "Is *this* a perfect building?" Help me to remember that the building is not finished yet, and that therefore it cannot be perfect! Thy righteousness goes before Thee, O Lord; praise waiteth for Thee till the seventh morn shall dawn. Thou art still working at the structure; and to the present eye there seems disorder. Teach me that the disorder lies in the process of building! Give me a vision of Thy completed plan! Thy plan is perfection through suffering—the glorification of minor chords in a symphony. To-day I hear the minor chords, but not the symphony. They are voices crying in the wilderness. It is their *wilderness*—their isolation from the other notes, that makes their sound so sad. Often I stretch my hands to Thee and say, "Where is the sign of Thy love!" Tell me that the minor notes will be justified when the symphony comes! Tell me that one day the voices of the universe will sing together in a blaze of harmony! Tell me that the chord which to-day seems to jar will to-morrow join! Tell me that in the symphonic chorus there is a place prepared for the seemingly discordant tone! Tell me that grief will be wedded to glory, that pain will be married to

peace, that toil will be united to triumph, that loss will be linked with love, that burdens will blend with beauty, that cares will be heard as carols, that the dirge will keep time to the dance! Thy righteousness has gone before Thee, O my Father; I shall find its vindication at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

Man's Need of Immortality

"Remember how short my time is; wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain!"—Ps. LXXXIX. 47.

I WOULD describe this as the earliest Bible cry for immortality. It is a very peculiar cry. It is grounded not upon instinct, but upon reason. It is not a longing founded upon the mere love of life. It is not a desire based upon the mere dread of death. It is not a wish rising from the mere search for new surroundings. It is a cry originating in the spirit of economy—the resistance to waste. The psalmist is impressed with the inadequacy of the term of human life. He does not mean that it is too short for enjoyment; enjoyment is always taken at a quick draught. But he thinks it too short for the work assigned to it. He sees the labourer hired into the vineyard with orders to perform a certain task. But he finds that the task given to the labourer is one which he could not possibly perform within the limits of the working day. He says, "What does

the lord of the vineyard mean by this disproportion between work and time; surely he must intend the labour to be continued into another day!" And you will find that the deepest cry of all ages has been the psalmist's cry. What makes us crave a future, is not a sense of this world's misery, but a sense of this world's vanity. We say with the psalmist, "Wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain—why hast Thou given them working orders which are quite incommensurate with the brief time they have to live on earth?" We feel that there is more furniture to be put into the house than the house will hold. We are prompted to boundless aspiration, and we live on earth but for an hour. We are inspired to endless love, and it never reaches summer. We are bidden by conscience to work for all ages, and we have only threescore years and ten. Life's day is too short for us. It is not too short for the bee, which *completes* its destined palace. It is not too short for the lark, which completes its destined song. It is not too short for the ox, which completes its ploughing in the field. But it is too short for man, whose ideal is unrealised, whose song is unfinished, whose labour in the field is scarce begun.

Therefore, O Lord, I know that this is not my

goal. I have brought into the vineyard implements which I can never use—which I have no time to use. Thou hast furnished me with powers which here can have no adequate exercise. Hast Thou made me, then, in vain! It cannot be, O my Father. I speak of the ephemeral insect; yet, if this life were my all, the insect would not be so ephemeral as I. The insect finishes the work which Thou gavest it to do; I leave my studies incomplete, my book unwritten, my picture without its closing touch, my house without its topmost storey. But it is just my incompleteness that makes my hope. I know Thou wouldst not give me power to be squandered; I know Thou hast appointed for me another day. It is not my fear that cries to Thee; it is my sense of justice and my wish to vindicate *Thy* justice. If earth met all my needs, I would *accept* the day of death. But earth has not fully responded to any one cry of my spirit, and I claim response from *Thee*. It is in defence of Thee that I seek a life beyond. I cannot bear to see the wasted gifts upon the shore. Utilise them, O Lord! Surely there is light waiting somewhere for my mirror! Surely there are viands waiting somewhere for my table! Surely there is rest waiting somewhere for my spread couch! Surely

there are guests waiting somewhere for the many vacant seats within my soul! Surely there are answers waiting somewhere to the myriad epistles written by my heart! Forbid that I should think Thou hast made my life in vain!

The Connection between Sanctity and Salubrity

"God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Thy saving health may be known among all nations."—Ps. LXVII. 1, 2.

THERE is a strong connection between health and happiness—between the shining of the heart and the soundness of the body. The connection, I think, is more seen in the prevention than in the cure of disease. When an illness has actually mastered us it is usually vain to say, "Keep up your spirits." The tendency of illness is to keep *down* the spirits. You remember how this is suggested in the Book of Job. Why does the Satan of the drama after overwhelming Job by poverty and bereavement ask leave to afflict him with ill-health? It is because, while poverty and bereavement make us prostrate, ill-health *keeps* us prostrate—prevents us from seeing the actual sunbeams which remain. But it is as a safeguard from sickness rather than a cure of sickness that the study of sunbeams is valuable. When the body

is laid low, all the light and music in the world may fail to raise it; but a very little light and music might have prevented its prostration. It is where the salt of life has lost its savour that the body is trodden down; but where the savour of life is enjoyed, there is a body-*guard*. Now, the psalmist says that religion has a *medical* value. He says that everywhere—"among all nations" —it tends to preserve health. It does so because it furnishes a sunbeam to the heart. It gives a promise of good fortune to come. A promise of coming good fortune brings a flood of mental energy, and that is converted into bodily energy. The worries that make us physically weak are almost entirely occupied with the *future*, whether of this world or other worlds. The sting of poverty is the thought of to-morrow. The sting of bereavement is the cloud beyond death. The sting of conscience is the doubt of our qualification for heaven. And, if our worries are generally about the future, they can have no panacea like religion. Religion alone can make a heart confident about the *future*. Human effort may in a measure redeem the past; human toil may provide much for the present; but only the sense of God can gild my future. It is no mere metaphor when the Bible calls God "the health of my counte-

nance"; for the cares that ruffle the body are not the troubles of to-day but the troubles of to-morrow, and nothing can alleviate the troubles of to-morrow but the shining face of God.

Shine into my heart, Thou better Sun, and I shall be physically strong. It is rather on my heart than on my garden I need Thy shining. All Thy sunbeams might fall on my garden and leave my heart in depression. That which weighs down my spirit, and therefore my flesh, is ever the *coming* day. I am exposed to sickness on Monday from the mental worries of Tuesday. It is my thought for *to-morrow* that weakens me in the previous night; my shadows are the forecasts of things to be; I am weighted by the cares I hear coming. Thou alone, O Lord, canst muffle the sound of these wings; Thou alone canst give peace for to-morrow. Shine on me with Thy face—Thine outlook of good cheer! Take away preliminary dread, that I may be proof against the pestilence! Dispel anticipative downcastness, that I may be scathless among the sick! Quell dark premonitions, that I may be untouched by the contagion! Inspire me with hope, that I may not be wearied by the way! Shed Thy light on my future, that the burdens of the present may not bruise me! Fill me with

antecedent joy, that I may not be caught by the atmosphere's cold! Encompass with song my opening journey, that I may defy the draught from lane and alley! My spirit will be the guardian of my body when I have learned that *Thou* art my keeper.

The Relation of Severity to Pardon

"Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their doings."—Ps. xcix. 8 (R.V.).

THERE is a great confusion of thought on the subject of retribution. It is supposed that when a man suffers for his fault it indicates that God is angry with him. The notion is that God may forgive him after suffering his penalty, but that the receiving of the penalty implies Divine displeasure. The psalmist's view is just the opposite. He says that in dealing with His people God forgave first and punished afterwards, "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their doings." The idea seems to be that when God forgives a man, part of His forgiveness consists in the reparation of his wrong. You will observe that God's vengeance is here said to fall on acts—not on persons. The more I love a wrongdoer and the more perfectly I forgive his wrong, the more shall I be eager to have it counteracted, expiated. If I have a son whose fast living has involved him in deep debt,

my enmity to the debt will only be *increased* by my reconciliation to himself. If I had cast him off, I might wash my hands of his disgrace. But, as I have received him back, his disgrace pains me, revolts me. I appropriate it as in part my own. I do so just because I have taken back my son into the membership of my family. If I had perpetually expelled him from my family, I should have deemed his disgrace no affair of mine. But because I have reinstated him, it does become my affair. I feel that his creditors lie at my door. I feel by the very love I bear him that his deed has left a stain upon my own garment which, both in his interest and mine, must be rubbed out. The debt must be paid—if possible with his co-operation, certainly with his consent. The blotting-out of the debt is my paternal vengeance upon his deed, and it comes from the very heart of my fatherhood. It is the voice, not of my anger, but of my love. It is the product of my pardon, the ground of my forgiveness, the result of my recognition. The retribution would never have been desired by me unless the song had first sounded in my soul, "This my son was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found."

Lord, let me not faint when my deed is rebuked by Thee; let me not say, "I am rejected of

heaven!" I plant a tree of evil and ask Thy pardon; by-and-by the tempest comes and tears it down. Shall I say that it is Thy vengeance upon me? Nay, my Father; it is only Thy vengeance upon my tree. The tearing down of my structure is itself the sign of my pardon; if Thou hadst loved me less, Thou wouldst have let it stand. Is it not a good gift of Thy love that all my wicked deeds should be burned up—burned with unquenchable fire. Let my first prayer to Thee be a prayer for the undoing of my past! I have read of the ill-planted seed, "When the sun was up, it was scorched." When the sun of Thy favour rises upon me, all my ill-planted seeds shall wither. They shall wither *because* of Thy sun, because of the warmth of Thy love. Let no one persuade me at that moment that I am in the cold, in the outer darkness! Let me claim Thy *sunshine* as the witherer of my false gourd! It is not Thine anger but Thy love that demands the atonement. After spiritual death is passed, the judgment comes. Teach me that the judgment is a sign of life, not death! In my chastisement let me read Thy charity! In my correction let me recognise Thy Christ! In my retribution let me detect Thy radiance! In my pain let me feel Thy pity! In my forfeiture let me behold Thy

favour! In my stripes let me see Thy smile! In my remorse let me discern Thy reconciliation! In the sharpness of my visitation let me hail the shining of Thy visage! There is no proof of Thy Fatherhood like the scourging of my sin.

The Road to Righteousness

"That ye would walk worthy of God who hath called you."—I. THESS. II. 12.

There is a point here which, because it lies very much on the surface, has generally escaped attention. It is this—Paul, in making an appeal to his fellow-sinners, appeals not to their humility but to their pride. We should have expected him to have done otherwise. He was deeply conscious himself of his moral shortcomings, and he was not less aware of the shortcomings of those around him. Should we not, then, have looked for a direction to these shortcomings. Should we not have expected him to say, "Consider how bad you are, how needy you are, how threadbare you are, how much you are in want of a new garment!" On the contrary, he appeals to them on the opposite ground. He tells them they are not wholly threadbare, not quite destitute. He tells them there is something noble about them—something which has caused them to be elected to a high position, and in which they ought to feel

a legitimate pride. He bids them contemplate that part of their image which is *not* effaced—bids them seek Christ, not through the sight of their rags but through the light of their star, "Walk worthy of God who hath called you." And I am quite sure that Paul is right. I am convinced we often fail to win men just because we suggest to them their badness rather than their goodness. It is a fatal thing for a man when he comes to feel that nobody believes in him. Never let your child see that you expect nothing of his integrity; if you expect nothing you will get nothing. Never meet a statement of his by declaring, "I have no faith in a word you say"; that will paralyse his efforts after truth. Rather say, "Remember, I trust in your honour, I believe in your sincerity, I have confidence that you would not deceive me." That will make an appeal to any part of his garment which is still unrent. The stripes of conscience always fall on the better side of us. When do I mourn the barrenness of my moral field? It is when I catch sight of a patch of green. A bad man is never so near to repentance as when he is surprised into a good action. It is from hope, not from despair, that the sting of conscience comes. I am never ashamed of myself till I see what I *might* have been. When

does the man of Tarsus fall to the earth? When he gets a vision of his better self—when the voice of Christ says to him, "I am surprised that a man like you should not have been on my side; Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me!"

Lord, show me my better self that I may repent in dust and ashes! All repentant souls I have ever seen have been vanquished by a sight of the *sunshine.* I have seen Magdalene raining tears of penitence at Thy feet; but her tears were brought by the sunshine—Thy smile of reconciliation. I have seen Peter go out and weep bitterly; but his weeping came from Thy look of unexpected love. I have seen the Samaritan stricken at the well; but she had received first a draught of the living water. Help me to imitate Thy Divine method, O Lord! When I go to the miscreant to win him back to Thee, let me seek within him for traces of the dawn! Let me come to him as to a man who has a future, not as to a man who has a past! Let me approach him not with a scourge, but with a smile! Let me not tell him of his night, but of his possible morning! Let me put into his hands a photograph of what he will be to-morrow! Let me not say to him, "You see how bad human nature is"; let me say, "You see how beautiful is that human nature

which you are spoiling!" Tell him that he is not himself, that the likeness of him hung up in heaven is quite different from his present mien! Then will shame come—not from his night, but from his day. Then will disgust come—not from his rags, but from his prospective robe. Then will remorse come—not from his deadness, but from the pulse of his incipient life; and hope will bring forth the cry, "I have been unworthy of my calling."

The First Token of Divine Fellowship

"I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat."—Ex. xxv. 22.

Is it not rather a strange place for communion between God and man. Communion always implies some affinity of nature between two or more minds. One would think the mercy-seat the last place for an affinity of man with God. It is a meeting of extremes—the Holy One and the conscious sinner, the Righteous Judge and the suppliant for pardon, the Sitter on the Great White Throne and the convicted miscreant at the bar of justice. We could have understood communion with the Divine in *other* quarters. We could have felt it under the throbbing stars, where our hearts vibrate with the sense of the infinite. We could have realised it in the presence of genius where our spirit is made to forget its own limits. We could have learned it even from our moments of spiritual thirst, for the thirst for God implies a capacity for God. But that there should be communion in the moment of our moral conviction,

that there should be Divine fellowship in the hour when we recognise that we are clothed in rags—this is a startling thing! And yet it is true. For, what is it that convicts a man? What is it that makes a human soul a suppliant for mercy? It is holiness already begun. The white throne of God is only visible to the eye that is emerging from impure waters. I am never so near to God as when I cry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" Not even when vibrating 'neath the stars am I so near as then. The stars reveal something *beyond* me; the conviction of sin reveals something *in* me. George Macdonald has somewhere said that there are colours which are only brought to light by a cloudy day. I think it is pre-eminently true in the sphere of the mercy-seat. I never learn that I have a little good in me till I have realised my worthlessness. It is not increased poverty, but increased means, that makes me a suppliant. It is the light, not the darkness, that brings me to my knees. The shadow that I see is the shadow of my God. I mistake the shadow for nightfall; I sit down to weep. I imagine that I am sitting on the cold ground; and all the time I am on the doorstep of my Father's house, and the door is open, and my Father is coming out to take me

in. It is the brightness of God's face that makes me cry for mercy.

Lord, it is on my *sea* that Thou walkest; it is on the billows of my soul that Thou drawest near. The first proof of Thy presence is inward storm. It is by the rolling of the waves of conscience that I know Thee to be nigh. When Thou wert absent from my heart there was no wind, there were no waves; the sea was a great calm. But when Thy feet touched the waters my storm arose—the storm of my conscience. The thing which yesterday looked harmless became fraught with peril. The deeds on which yesterday I gazed with complacency spread blackness in my soul. The valleys became mountains, the drops appeared oceans, the trifles loomed as deadly crimes, and I beat upon my breast and cried, "Lord, be merciful unto me!" That was my hour of communion with Thee, O my Father. It was not the hour which *brought* communion; it was itself the fruit of fellowship. It was Thy *presence* woke the sea. It was Thy *footstep* broke the silence of my spirit. It was Thy *hand* drew aside the curtain that hid the mirror of myself. I shall tremble at that mirror no more. Though it shows my rags, though it reveals my squalor, though it ensures my humility, I shall tremble no

more. I have learned my nothingness; but it is by Thy nearness. I have felt my poverty; but it is by Thy presence. I have experienced my shadow; but it is by Thy shining. I have been taught my weakness; but it is by the sweep of Thy wing. I have found my frailty; but it is by contact with Thy fire. I have been convicted of sin; but it is by the sight of Thy sanctuary. My cry has come from the Christ within me; the suppliant for Thy mercy has the sign of communion.

The Price I Pay for Seeing Christ

"When he saw Him, straightway the spirit tare him."—MARK IX. 20.

THIS invalid only knew himself to be a weakling when he saw Jesus. There is nothing which rends the spirit like the sight of a high ideal. Spiritual stagnancy is the result of a low standard. There is a phrase we often hear: "He is on very good terms with himself." We apply it to a man who has never had any rending of the spirit. I can never be on bad terms with myself as long as there is only one man within me. If in my heart there hangs the picture of a second self, a higher self, a self which mimics my errors and tells me how things ought to be done—if there is in my soul a man who sings after me the song I have spoiled, reads after me the piece I have ruined, performs after me the service I have poorly rendered—that presence makes me small. It puts me on bad terms with myself—on wrestling terms, the terms on which Jacob stood with his angel. It will not in the least soothe my struggle

to know that I am the first man in the company, in the village, or even in the kingdom. There was not a man of his day so good as Jacob—he was the chosen patriarch of God. But he was far below his angel—the ideal of what he would like to have been. It was his angel that made him miserable. In view of its flight he was lame; in sound of its song he was dumb; in presence of its radiance he had not reached the breaking of the day. He was on bad terms with himself; he wrestled with himself; the complacent calm of long years was broken, and the tempest arose. When Paul met a storm at sea, the men of Malta said he must be a bad man. We are all apt to feel like the men of Malta. When we see a storm-tossed spirit toiling with its own waves and battling with its own breezes, we say, Surely he is a child of the darkness! We are wrong; he is a child of the light. It is only because he is a child of the light that he wrestles with the deep. He felt no discord till he heard the music. He knew no midnight till he saw the morning. He dreamed not of his mean attire till he gazed on the seamless robe. He got his cross from Christ, his ladenness from light, his burden from seeing beauty. He was humbled by a sight of heaven, prostrated by a ray of Patmos, broken by a song of Bethlehem,

crushed by a glimpse of Calvary, overwhelmed by a flash of Olivet, dwarfed by a vision of Damascus. The thorn which pierced his heart was a thorn in the crown of Jesus.

O Thou who art the ideal of what I ought to be, the ideal of what my Father would have me to be, come into my soul and shine! Give me one glimpse of the brightness of Thy glory! I know it will send me, not peace, but a sword; I know it will strike me blind to all that I once thought beautiful. I shall never again be pleased with my singing when I have heard Thy voice. I shall never again admire my garments when I have seen Thy robe. I shall never again prize my attainments when I have discerned Thy splendour. What matter!—come, Lord Jesus! At the price of my own humiliation, come! Though my flower of self-esteem shall wither, though my pride of life shall fade, though my peace of ignorance shall vanish, come! Though my ocean shall dwindle to a pool, though my palace shall shrink into a hut, though my silver shall be tarnished and my gold shall lose its glow, come! Come, though Thy shining be my shadow; come, though Thy presence be my poverty; come, though the vision tell me I am vile! I would rather be humble in sight of the

stars than proud in lighting my tapers. It is worth while to see my spots if I see them because of sunshine. It is worth while to hear my discords if I hear them because of harmony. It is worth while to find my darkness if I detect it by finding day. The rending of the heart will not ruffle me if it is rent by the dawning of Thy Spirit.

The Conflict of Spring and Autumn

"Many of the fathers, which were ancient men and had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy."—EZRA III. 12.

THIS is the earliest strife between the religious conservative and the religious liberal. It was a conflict of emotions. The old men and the young men both looked at the new building; the old wept and the young shouted. Youth clapped its hands and cried, "What a magnificent temple; what an advance we have made on the days of our fathers!" Age *wrung* its hands and said, "How are the mighty fallen; what a contrast between this poor modern fabric and the house of long ago!" They had both some reason on their side, the old generation and the new. The former could say, "The original house was built by our own king and not by a foreigner." The latter could reply, "Yes, but the very fact shows that our faith is getting cosmopolitan." Yet neither of them had the right of the question, because neither of them had yet seen the final temple.

The final temple was coming; it was Christ. It was to unite the views both of the fathers and of the children. It was to satisfy the old men, because it was to be built by their own king; it was to satisfy the young, because it was to make room for other lands. The two first temples were only half-buildings—subjects for neither laughter nor tears. The one was sacred to yesterday; the other was dedicated to the morrow. The one was enshrined in memory; the other was consecrated to hope. The one glorified the past; the other monopolised the future. The one sang hymns to a vanished evening; the other paid its orisons to a prospective morning. But in the temple of *Christ* there was to be a joining of the hands; memory and hope were to embrace each other; the evening and the morning were to be one day.

Ye fathers and ye children, I have a message for you. Why dwell ye in camps apart as if youth and age were irreconcilable things! I would have you shake hands on the battlefield; I would have age to catch the spirit of youth and youth to acquire the reverence for age. Ye who have looked upon a former temple and thought it all-glorious, do not let retrospect banish prospect! Fold hope in the arms of memory! Remember,

measured by the clock of eternity you, too, are young. Yours should not be wholly a looking back. Is not the world before you—the real world, the larger world! Are not there mansions of your Father's house more splendid than any temple you have seen! Why should not yours be the wing of the morning, the song of the lark, the bud of the primrose! Why should the new and unexplored be foreign to you! Are you not on the very borders of the new, the very frontiers of the unexplored! You, of all men, should not be unsympathetic to the spirit of youth. And ye of the rising generation who are clapping your hands over a novel piece of architecture, do not let prospect banish retrospect! Fold memory in the arms of hope! Remember, your very hope is a gift from your fathers, an heirloom from the past. Reverence that past! Though you can no longer wear its garments, let no ruthless hand destroy them! Lay them by tenderly; wrap them up carefully; keep them pure constantly; let them be garments of the spirit even when the body has outgrown them! So shall the evening and the morning meet. Age will become liberal and youth conservative. Age will see the dawn and youth will prize the twilight. Age will rise on the wing and youth will seek the parent nest.

Age will get the heart of a boy and youth the stability of a senior. Age will have its forecast visions and youth its retrospective dreams. Age will look to the west and youth have its gaze on the east. Age will greet us with the cry, "Christ is coming!" and youth will surprise us with the memory, "He has done all things well!"

The Qualification of a Servant

"I am Thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies."—Ps. CXIX. 125.

I SHOULD call this distinctively the servant's prayer. At first sight it might seem that the prayer of a servant should be more elementary. It might seem that the simple duty of a servant is to ask for orders. The psalmist has a different view. To his mind the perfection of domestic service is not the receiving but the forestalling of orders—the providing for requirements beforehand. "Because I am a servant, give me understanding, that I may know in advance the things Thou hast need of—that I may not require to wait for Thy verbal instructions but may consider the wants of Thy household." That is the psalmist's meaning, and it is founded on truth. For, in God's house as in man's house, there are two ways in which one may be a "good and faithful servant"—a lower way and a higher way. The lower way is that of the beginner. It is the waiting for every

detail. "What wouldst Thou have me to do this day? Shall I sweep three rooms or four? Shall I cleanse for the sanctuary six vessels or twelve? Shall I prepare for Thy house the same amount that was consumed yesterday?" So asks the incipient servant. And in answer the heavenly Father gives the details; He issues ten commandments. But as yet He misses something in the servant—that thing which the psalmist calls understanding. He would be glad if the domestics of His house would exercise judgment. He craves in the servant a *second* stage of goodness and faithfulness. Let us suppose that the Father names four rooms of His sanctuary which require sweeping. Let us suppose that on descending from His presence the servant finds that in the interval a fifth apartment has become soiled. Would it not be desirable that in the mind of him or her the understanding should supersede the command. Is the fifth room to be left uncleaned because there is no verbal enactment concerning it! Is there none of the Lord's servants with discernment enough to improvise an eleventh commandment—to satisfy God's will instead of His mere law! That is what the Father longs for, that is what the psalmist prays for, that is what the instincts of all hearts desire.

Lord, men of old have said, "Teach me Thy law"; rather shall my prayer be, "Teach me Thy will." My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning; but it will be to suggest, not to receive, orders. I should not like to come with the inquiry, "To how many shall I minister this day?" Nay, my Father, rather would my voice be this: "I cry to Thee from a land of shadows where I listen to the sigh of the weary. I bear these shadows on my heart up to Thy throne. Wilt Thou grant me Thy grace to dispel them! Wilt Thou give me liberty to act for Thee without command! Wilt Thou let me serve Thine interest where I see it in need! Wilt Thou let me keep Thy house in order where from Thee I have received *no* order! Wilt Thou permit me to forestall Thy wants, to go beyond Thine expressed desires! Wilt Thou give me a commission without detail—a mandate to help where I see heaviness, to brighten where I meet burdens, to comfort where I find calamities, to free where I encounter fetters, to protect where I recognise poverty, to cheer where the atmosphere is chill! Such would I have my prayer to be. It is a small thing to keep Thy *precept;* I would consult Thy pleasure. It is a light thing to obey Thy word; I would minister to Thy will. It is an easy thing

to avoid breaking Thy law; I would abstain from violating Thy love. Those hired at the eleventh hour wait for Thy morning orders; I know Thy mind *now*, I know Thy wish now. I can forestall Thy wish. I can understand Thy heart. I can provide in advance for the requirements of Thy love. My service will be perfected when I shall outrun Thy commandments.

The Inadequacy of Spiritual Solitude

"The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another. In what place therefore ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us."—NEH. IV. 19, 20.

THE great obstacle to the building of the old Jerusalem was the distance in space between the workmen: "We are separated upon the wall, one far from another." The great obstacle to the building of the *new* Jerusalem is also the distance in space between the workmen. This latter statement seems a paradox. We can understand how a physical wall requires a vast company to build it. But we have always taught ourselves to believe that salvation is a personal matter and that *its* wall must be constructed in solitude. We look upon companionship as existing for outside things —for the dance, for the orchestra, for the army, for the field of politics. But when a man begins to erect his own soul, we expect him to be alone

with God. We expect him to stand in the solitary place and commune only with the King of Kings. We are wrong; not thus shall I be able to build the walls of the new Jerusalem. The work of my salvation is not a solitary process. It is a solemn hour; but it is the solemnity, not of silence, but of crowdedness. I must summon into my sympathy all the sons of men. I cannot build up the virtues of my heart if I am thinking only of God. Would I be humble; mine must be a humility before *man*. Anyone could be humble before God. It does not need a redeemed soul to shrink in nothingness beneath the stars of night. But to sink my interests before a *brother*, to refrain from self-display in the presence of an inferior—*that* is humility! Would I be meek; it must be before *man*. I dare not answer God; all flesh is silent in *His* presence. But to be gentle with an equal, to be soft with a dependant, to be lenient with a fallen soul—*that* is meekness! Would I be charitable; it must be before *man*. God needs not my silver nor my gold; they would add no drop to His ocean. But, to clothe a brother's rags, to soothe a sister's pain, to give the children bread, to help the orphans' cry, to bind the broken heart and comfort the wounded conscience—*that* is to succour God, that is charity! The walls of the

new Jerusalem must be built in the presence of man.

My soul, when thou art building thy character, summon into thy sympathy the sons of men! Do not dwell in the presence of God alone! The pillars of character have no value if they are only reared before God. How shalt thou test the decline of thy pride? Shalt thou stand before the smoke and fire of Sinai and beat upon thy breast and say, "Unclean"? That were a poor victory over pride—merely to confess that thy lamp is weaker than the sunshine. But if thou wouldst see the evidence of pride's decline, bring thy lamp into the vicinity of a taper! Come and stand before the rags of a penitent! Come and match thyself with Magdalene; come and pair thyself with fallen Peter! Can pride die when thou art standing on such a mountain as *that!* Canst thou feel thy sin in the presence of greater sinners! Canst thou beat upon thy breast in beholding one beneath thee; canst thou feel thy need of cleansing in looking on one more meanly clad! Then thou hast the true beatitude; thine is the kingdom of heaven. It is easy to kill thy self-consciousness in the *valley*—in the place where thou meetest with God. But to kill it on thy mount, to destroy it in thy strong point, to sink it in the place where

thou meetest thy forlorn brother or thy disgraced sister—this will earn Thee the blessing of the Lord. When thou hearest Christ's sermon, let it be in the presence of the multitude; test thy character by its power to stand before *man!*

The Variedness of the Divine Benevolence

"Thy manifold mercies."—Neh. ix. 19.

"Thy manifold mercies" does not mean the same as "Thy many mercies." Mercies may be numerous and yet not manifold. I may distribute bread amid a whole multitude in a wilderness. In this case my mercies have been numberless; but they have not been manifold. They have been all of one kind—donation. Manifold mercy is mercy which takes different forms. It is like manifold architecture; it can build in opposite ways. I think there are four forms of mercy known to man —that which gives, that which refuses, that which deprives, and that which prepares. To a thirsty boy in good health you give a copious draught of cold water; to a fevered boy you deny it; from a delirious grasp you tear it; finally, through healing remedies, you prepare for its administration by-and-by. Now, amid God's infinite forms of mercy, in relation to the cup of life He has these four. There are times when He gives liberally,

when He says, "Drink abundantly." There are other times in which our lips are parched with fever—parched even while they pray. We cry for the copious draught, and it does not come. If it came, it would increase the heat of the blood; and our Father refuses to send it. There are times, again, when the mere denial is not sufficient—when the hand needs to be dispossessed. The delirious patient has already grasped the cup, and only a wrench will tear it from his hold. The mercy of our Father gives that wrench. It seems to the patient a harsh thing, a strange thing; but the deprivation is really a blessing. And, once more, there are times in which, instead of the cup we desire, our Father sends us things which we do not desire—bitter *medical* draughts which are very different from the looked-for water. Yet they are meant to prepare us for the water. They are sent to cool the fever and make us ready for the copious draught to-morrow. They seem to mock us by offering a crown of thorns instead of a crown of gold; but in reality they are a sanitary preparation for the coming with safety of that unstinted supply which at present could only come with danger. This, too, is the mercy of our Father.

My soul, thou art now under one of the manifold mercies of God. I often hear thee say, "I am

under God's judgment." God's judgment is God's judging—His decision of what is best. Has thy prayer been denied thee. So was Israel's when she came out of Egypt. She asked an entrance into the Promised Land; she was answered by forty years in the wilderness. Was that judgment! It was sublime mercy. Was one just released from a fever hospital fit for the arduous service of the land of Canaan? No; the granting of her prayer would have killed her. Has thy possession been wrenched from thy hand. So was Judah's when she was carried captive into Babylon. Was that judgment! It was her Father's mercy. In her delirium of self-will she was grasping the potion of her pride, and the poison was entering into her soul; was it not kind that the sick-nurse Babylon should restrain her frantic arms! Hast thou received something bitter to drink instead of the water thou hast desired; has thine experience seemed to mock thy prayer. So did John's. He asked the right hand in the kingdom and received in its place the cup of fiery baptism. Was that judgment! It was the mercy of his God. Wouldst thou put an oar into the right hand of an invalid; he would miss the stroke on the ocean of God's love. To the beloved disciple, to thee, the Father's answer is not the gift, but the preparing for the

gift. He has *laid up* for thee a crown of glory. Why "laid up"? Because thou art not ready for its wearing. Thou hast need to be healed ere thou canst run and not be weary. Thou hast need of the waters of Marah ere thou canst taste the grapes of Eshcol. Thou hast need of the bitters of Babylon ere thou hast right to the liberty of the tree of life. God's mercy may lie in thy sunshine; but methinks, O my soul, it is oftener found in thy cloud.

The Requisites for Perfect Joy

"Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire."—Rev. xx. 14.

There are, according to the Bible, two things which make this world unhappy—disease of body and imprisonment of soul. The former is here expressed by the word "death," the latter by the word "hell" or "Hades." The happiness of heaven is said to lie, not in the addition of new colours, but in the removal of these two obstructive elements. Did it ever strike you how the joys of the future life are always described as negative. There is to be "no more sea," "no more curse," "no more pain," "no more sorrow," no "shut gates" because "no night." The men of the coming city are to hunger no more, thirst no more, be oppressed with heat no more, shed tears no more. Whence this negative description of the Christian's heaven? Other religions painted their paradise in added rays of beauty; why is the Christian ideal merely the *taking away* of something? I will tell you. It is because in the view

of Christianity this present world is not deficient in perfect beauty; it is prevented from *enjoying* its beauty, and it is so prevented by these two things —death and sin—the diseased body and the imprisoned soul. I am thoroughly at one with the evangelist in thinking that on its positive side there is nothing wrong with the present world. We are constantly reminded by the pulpit of our sense of the insufficiency of this earthly life. For my part I deny that I have this sense of insufficiency. I want nothing better than this world—if it would last. What keeps it from lasting is the presence of two things—death and sin. Death steals my friends; sin blights my friendships. The one robs me of a presence; the other bereaves me of an ideal. I am told that earthly joys are evanescent. No; it is their objects that are evanescent. I do not tire of my flowers; but autumn withers them. I do not transfer my love; but sin destroys the identity of its object. St. John tells us to love not the world; but why? Not because it is bad, but because it is fleeting—because it "passeth away." If something would arrest its passing, if something would give it permanence, if something would endow it with perpetual bloom, we should be able to say, "This is our rest."

And such, O Lord, is promised in the words, "Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire." Thou hast offered to destroy the two enemies to my perfect enjoyment of beauty—the diseased body and the imprisoned soul. I need no lovelier fields, no fairer woods or flowers. I need no sweeter harps, no lutes of richer tone. I need no dearer ties than those which bind me to earth and home. But my two enemies are sowing tares in the field; my two enemies are making discord in the music; my two enemies are loosing the earthly ties. It is not to get free of earth I ask Thy salvation; it is to keep it, to preserve it, nay, for the first time really to possess it. I often pray for entrance into Thy heavenly glory; yet what I should ask is entrance into Thine earthly glory. The colours I love here are fit to be loved yonder if they were only stripped of death and hell. Not brighter bloom but more unfading bloom, not fairer tints but more abiding tints, not lovelier forms but more undying forms, is what my spirit craves. Men speak of earthly vanity; but its vanity is its fleetingness. The defect of its pleasures is that they vanish. Free them from this vanity, O Lord! Redeem them from the taint of perishableness! Breathe into them Thine own eternal life! Perpetuate them with Thy

presence, immortalise them with Thine indwelling! Make love lasting; make friendship fadeless; make charity changeless; make kindness constant; make warmth of heart winterless; make delight in beauty deathless; make the taste for music tireless; make the social hour sinless! Our earth will be Thy heaven when we have got rid of death and hell.

The Deepest Stage of Calamity

"The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"—PROV. XVIII. 14.

THE idea is that a calamity affects us, not according to the weight of the stroke, but according to the state of our thoughts. The spirit of a man is his mental state as distinguished from his outward circumstances. The proverb says that an outward misfortune influences the life, not in proportion to its actual severity, but in proportion to the resources of the mind. I am profoundly convinced that this is true. Two men take a fever at the same time; one dies, the other recovers. The popular view is that in the former case the physical stroke was more powerful. Yet in itself it may have been weaker. The man who died may have succumbed to the fever because he was down in spirit when the fever seized him. Two men meet with a simultaneous bereavement. One, though deeply grieved, is not overwhelmed; the other breaks his heart and sinks into the grave. Shall we say that to the latter the stroke

was heavier than to the former? No; the difference lies, not in the heaviness of the stroke, but in the spot whereon it fell. It lies in the contrast of their inward state. The man who outlives his loss does so by reason of a strong hope—the hope, nay, the sight, of a land beyond death's sea. The man who is killed by his bereavement is so killed by reason of an *eclipse* of hope—by reason of a mental cloud which has obscured his rainbow of promise. That which prostrates us and that which supports us is in every case, not a thing, but a thought. We speak of the "ills which flesh is heir to." I think we look for the black in the wrong direction; we should say, the "ills which spirit is heir to." All the crowning calamities of life are in the thinking—not in the striking. The crushing wound comes ever from within. The friend who is separated from you by death may be really less removed than the friend who goes from you to a foreign country; yet between the two cases there is no comparison in the degree of your sorrow. Why is this? It lies in the thought. The foreign country has a name in your heart; the dwelling-place of the dead has as yet no name. It is the *idea* that makes the difference between separation and bereavement. Both equally for the time miss "the touch of a vanished hand

and the sound of a voice that is still"; but in the one there is the hope of future communion, in the other there may be a cloud which obscures to-morrow's sky.

Therefore, O Father of Lights, show Thy light within! *There* lies the possibility of a mortal wound—not in the storm, not in the cold, not in the battle. Often have I been struck with the picture of Thy Christ upon the sea. He walked upon the raging waters and never sought to still their raging till He reached the ship of human life; and then He spoke the mandate, not to the waves, but to the soul: "Peace; be still!" Often have I asked, Why did He begin with the seemingly least aggressive? I see it now, O my Father. I see that the stormiest spot is and has ever been, not the wave, but the soul. I see that it is my *heart* that first needs to receive the mandate, "Peace; be still!" I see that nothing can submerge me if my spirit be not submerged. Therefore it is for my *soul* that first I pray. It is to *me* I would have Thee first say, "Peace!" Let Thy Christ put the rainbow in my *heart* ere it is stretched across the flood! The cloud of to-day will not kill me if the sun of to-morrow is clear; light to-morrow's sun, O Lord! The bleakness of winter will not daunt me if my faith

makes the springtime near; plant the faith of the spring, O Lord! The partings by death will not chill me if the hope of reunion bring cheer; shed the hope of reunion, O Lord! I can bear the storm on the sea if the calm has entered my soul; Thy best comfort is the unwounded spirit.

The Religious Ground of Light-heartedness

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord."—Ps. LV. 22.

THERE has always been in the world a great admiration for carelessness. A young man has a pride in saying, "I don't care." When a command is imposed on him by a higher authority, he often resists it; but his main motive in the resistance is to show the absence of care. When the advice of a friend arrests him in a downward path, he frequently brushes it aside; but he is not so much actuated by love of the downward path as by the wish to appear reckless and free. Recklessness is to him the synonym for manliness. Now, what is it that in our young days makes this spirit to us so attractive? It is its apparent resemblance to something which is really its contrary—the religious life. There is such a thing as a *Christian* absence of care—a freedom from weight, anxiety, depression. But you will observe, it is an *absence* of care, not an annulling of it. The social epicurean tells his comrade to cast away his

burden; the Christian tells his comrade, not to cast it away, but to lay it somewhere else: "Cast thy burden on the Lord." There is a very great difference between the two commands. It is the difference between throwing your money into the sea and putting it in a bank beyond the possible risk of failure. A Christian's care is always to him his money—his treasure. He does not want to lose it; he would place it nowhere except in hands where it had no chance of being neglected. Let us say, for example, that you are anxious about the future of your child. The social epicurean will tell you, "Live for the day; do not look forward; enjoy the present hour and let to-morrow shift for itself." But the Christian will say: "You will best live for the present by making to-morrow sure. If you want to enjoy the hour you need not become cold to your child's future—you need not even think less about it. You have only to put to-morrow in other hands—in safer hands—in God's hands. It is not forgetfulness you need; it is mindfulness without mourning. It is not the trampling of care under your feet, but the transference of care to another bosom. Destroy it not, ignore it not, bury it not, escape it not; but take it up tenderly, fold it up cautiously, and lay it on the heart of the Lord."

O Thou who on the ocean of Thy love bearest with their freight of care many ships that pass in the night, I launch my laden soul in Thee. I come not to get the *world's* peace—the peace of emancipation from unselfish interests. I come to get the opposite peace—Thy peace—the peace of knowing that my unselfish interests are in safe hands. I do not bid my burden good-bye when I give it to Thee; rather am I sure that I shall see it again—made precious, glorified, transformed into a weight of gold. If my boy has gone to sea, I am not made peaceful because I have torn him from my heart, but because on the sea I have beheld Thine own footprints and I know he is with Thee. I am light by reason of Thy weightedness. I would not have my debts unpaid even if I received a discharge. I should like to know that somebody has taken up their weight. What matters it to me that I am liberated if by my very liberation my brother is rendered poor! Will no one make possible what is impossible to me! Will no one pay to my brother what I owe! Will no one fill up what I have left behind in deeds of charity and love! *Thou* wilt, O Christ. I send Thee to my waste places on the wings of the morning. Finish what I have left in fragments! Build what I have not even begun! Put Thy

hand on what I have passed by! Kindle what I have allowed to be cold! Water the flowers I have let wither! Comfort the hearts I have not consoled! Rest the lives I have ruffled! Beautify the souls I have bruised! Delight the spirits I have made downcast! Fan the embers whose fires I have caused to fade! I shall be free from care when I have cast my burden on *Thee.*

The Christian Palliation of Pain

"When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." —MATT. X. 23.

THE days of persecution are past; has this text lost its meaning? No, it is to my mind the revelation of an eternal fact—a fact which distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. Christ's remedy for the immediate pressure of grief is one peculiarly His own. Consider the remedies proposed by some other faiths. The Buddhist says: "When you are oppressed by any sorrow, think how all your desires will be stilled in death." The Brahman says: "When you are oppressed by any sorrow, remember how all finite things are illusions." The Stoic says: "When you are oppressed by any sorrow, keep your mind on things that suppress emotion." The Jew says: "When you are oppressed by any sorrow, seek out and expiate the sin you have committed." Christ says none of these things. His recommendation is: "When you are oppressed by any sorrow, rest your thoughts as much as possible

upon some joy that remains; when you are persecuted in one city, flee into another." I think that we of modern days need this text as much as any in the Bible. Our danger in grief is that of forgetting our untouched joys. We have all some city of refuge—some spot left green. Christ says our first duty is to flee thither. He says we shall be better able to remedy any stroke of fortune if in the first instance we seek comfort in another direction. He practised this Himself in His cures. A paralytic came to be healed; Jesus said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Was not that irrelevant—to promise a man forgiveness of sin who wanted cure for paralysis? Yes, but in the irrelevancy lay the beauty. The best prelude to curing a man's paralysis is to get him over to the sunny side of the street—to fix his mind upon an actually existing joy. So, too, when Christ tells the labouring and laden in body that He will give them rest to their *souls*, it seems an irrelevancy; but it is not. What better prelude to a medical cure than a flash of sunshine in the soul; what better preparation for a physical improvement than a state of inward rest! Our Lord would have us first get out from the persecuted into the unpersecuted city and brace ourselves for struggle by an hour of peace.

I thank Thee, O Lord, that Thy cure for pain is gladness. All *human* teachers have sought to *add* to my pain. In my hour of sorrow I will not go to any of these. I will not go to the Buddhist—to be reminded that I am a dying creature. I will not go to the Brahman—to be told that life is an illusion. I will not go to the Stoic—to be taught that emotion is vain. I will not go to the Jew—to be informed I must expiate a secret sin. Unto whom can I go but unto Thee; Thou alone meetest my sorrow with the words of *life*. All others meet it with the words of death. When I come to them with my pain they refer me for refuge to another pain. But Thou healest my pain by a joy. Thou remindest me of a spot of sunshine which I have overlooked. Thou puttest into my hand the key of doors which I have neglected to unlock. Thou showest me green meadows which I have passed unheeded by. Thou pointest me to gems which I have dropped on the road and which are waiting to be gathered. Thou sayest, "Consider how many lilies of the field still grow, how many birds of the air still sing." Thou wouldst have me remember the blessings that are unblighted, the refuges that remain, the comforts that yet crown me. Thou wouldst have me know the wealth

that is unwasted, the pastures that are preserved, the friends that are not faded. Thou wouldst have me note how much worse things might have been—how many blasts did not blow, how many seas did not swell, how many clouds did not cluster. Thou wouldst have me learn in my city of persecution to count the cities which have not been persecuted.

The Christian's Highest Reward

"The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth."—PROV. XI. 31.

I UNDERSTAND the emphatic words to be, "in the earth." There never had been any doubt about the final reward of the righteous; but there were evidently some who were beginning to say: "It must be reserved for another world; this earth of ours is indifferent to moral distinctions." The writer of this proverb cries, "No; my reward will be here." I do not think he meant that it must come in his present life. Remember, the Jew held that he was to come back to this earth again on the Resurrection Morning. The whole point of the passage is that, either now or hereafter, either to-day or to-morrow, the righteous man will see the rectification of things below—the crooked made straight, the rough places made plain, the mountains abased and the valleys exalted. I doubt if a son of Israel would have thanked you for the fairest flowers and the loveliest woods in a world divorced from earthly memories;

his whole notion of immortality was the future glorifying of his present actions. And I believe that this is also the immortal hope of every Christian. Did you ever ask yourself, What is that recompense which a Christian saint desires? Is it a paradise in the seventh heaven which the tumult of earth will not reach? Is it a flight to regions unknown and at present unknowable? Is it the wearing of foreign purple and the hearing of foreign music and the engagement in foreign embassies? A Christian in the future life may occasionally have all these things; but he will deem none of them his recompense. What he wants is not a redemption from the past but a redemption *of* the past. He seeks a river clear as crystal; but he seeks it in the muddy haunts of time—"in the midst of the street." He desires a tree whose leaves are life-giving; but he wants it for "the healing of the nations." He craves a song of exquisite melody; but its subject is to be the glory of a human cross—"worthy is the Lamb that was slain." He searches for a precious emerald; but he does so in a rainbow of earthly tears. He longs to be able to cry, "Who are these that are arrayed in white robes?" but the answer he would like to receive is this: "These are they that came out of great tribulation."

Lord, wherever my spirit may dwell hereafter, the recompense I seek for my present deed is that the earth may be blessed in it. I gave a coin yesterday to a tattered woman, and she invoked all Thy chariots of blessing to descend upon me. She thought she was drawing profusely on Thy stores; to me, what she asked of Thee seemed inadequate. It was not treasure from above that I wanted from Thee; it was treasure from below. I wished some day to find that my coin had been a turning-point in this woman's fortune—that it had given her new hope, new comfort, new courage, new belief in man, new confidence in Thee. For any good I do, O my Father, it is *earth* that I should like to be recompensed. I plant not my seed in the dust that a flower may spring elsewhere. It is *this* spot I would have Thee deck with glory. I would have the fir-tree come forth in the place where the thorn grew; I would have the myrtle wave in the soil where the briar was expected. No unearthly wreath would compensate me for a life of devotion to Thy poor. It is my *devotion* I would see wreathed—the result of my labours, the travail of my soul. Sanctify my sacrifices, O Lord! Give weight to my words of counsel; preserve my promptings of comfort; re-echo my rousings to penitence! May my

charity bring moral cheer; may my sympathy bring inward strength; may my kindness bring life's rekindling! May I expel one drunkard's demon; may I heal one profligate's pollution; may I restore one fainter's faith; may I brighten one wanderer's way; may I call one hapless spirit home! Then shall mine be the most perfect of all recompenses—the recompense on earth!

The Illuminating Power of Righteousness

"The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings."—MALACHI IV. 2.

THERE is nothing which illuminates this world like the vision of righteousness, and therefore there is nothing which heals *doubt* like that vision. The reason is that only in the vision of righteousness do I learn my superiority to Nature. Every other vision dwarfs me. The glory of the natural sun makes me pale. The vastness of the mighty firmament makes me humble. The flash of the lightning makes me tremble. The height of the mountain makes me shrink. The depth of the ocean makes me feel shallow. The sight of disease and death make me identify myself with the flower that fades and the bird that dies. But when I see a righteous man I see something at variance with natural law—Professor Huxley himself tells me so. The law of Nature, the law of Evolution, is the survival of the strongest. But the law of Righteousness is the refusal of the strongest to survive at the expense of the weakest. It is the

insistence of the strong to share the life of the weak—to appropriate their burdens, to wear their infirmities. It is a law which never could have been made by physical nature, which interferes with physical nature, which in this sense is *super*natural. My vision of a righteous man is fitted to heal all my scepticism. It tells me that a human life is something unique, something revolutionary, something above the common clay. It tells me that a human soul can do what even the stars cannot do—make a new law which will override the old. It tells me that, with all its seeming insignificance, the little stream in the heart of a man has outweighed the wonder of the whole ocean—has turned the downward into an upward current and led the way to a higher plane. The righteous man is no longer a cipher. He was born a cipher, like the leaves and the grass. But he has reversed the order of science. He has made a new law—the death of the strong for the weak. He has arrested the first course of Nature. He has said: "You shall no longer live for self-preservation, but for the preservation of others." He has made the winds his missionaries, the mines his almoners, the seas his road to brotherhood, the steam his flag of union, the electricity his voice of fellowship, the light a framer of his neighbour's image, the heat a

warmer of his neighbour's hearth, the herb a soother of his neighbour's pain. The sacrificial man is the man that has *conquered* Nature; the vision of righteousness heals my despair.

Son of Man, Thou hast illumined my hope. Men, even good men, have underrated Thine illumination. They have sought it only on the brow of Olivet. To me the brightest proof of immortal life is Thy Calvary. To me Thy rising is less wonderful than Thy righteousness. In Thy rising Thou hast escaped Nature; but in Thy righteousness Thou hast conquered Nature. In Thy rising Thou has shown that material forces could not hold Thee; but in Thy righteousness Thou hast held *them.* Nature had cried, "Let the weak go to the wall, let the feeble fade, let the degenerate die!" *Thou* saidst, "Nay, it shall not be so." Thou hast borne on Thy bosom what Nature has passed by. Thou hast gathered the fragments she has cast like rubbish to the void. Thou hast brought the destitute from the desert; Thou hast called the tainted from the tombs; Thou hast raised the squalid from the swine; Thou hast freed the blind from their bars; Thou hast washed the leper from his loathsomeness; Thou hast lifted the palsied from their prostration; Thou hast relieved the halt from their helplessness;

Thou hast rescued the turbulent from their tossing on the sea. I need not wait for Easter Morn to see my immortality. That morning when I met Thee carrying Thy cross, that midday when I found Thee waiting at Samaria's well, that evening when I saw Thee breaking to man his bread, I knew that earth was passed and a new world begun.

Latent Piety

"With joy unspeakable and full of glory."—1 PETER I. 8.

THE climax of every emotion is silence. The climax of anger is not the thunder, not the earthquake, not the fire, not even the still small voice; it is the absence of any voice at all; we say habitually, "He was speechless with rage." The climax of grief is not the cry, not the shriek, not the paroxysm; it is the numbness, the deadness, the torpor, the insensibility to all around. The poet tells how a bereaved wife in seeing her "warrior dead" neither swooned nor cried. She was in the climax of grief—silence; to bring her down from the climax she had to be made to weep. And the climax of praise or joy is silence. Let me put a question. When did you experience most difficulty in expressing your admiration of a thing? Was it not when you were thoroughly carried away with rapture! A girl plays a piece of music with great brilliancy. She receives gushing compliments from all but one. That one

has been sitting in rapt attention all the time of the performance, yet at the close he only says, "Thank you." I should esteem his the greatest praise of all. His silence comes from the "joy unspeakable"—from an admiration too deep for words, too high for compliments, too intense for plaudits. Now, the climax of the praise of *God* is of this description. Carlyle has said, "Speech is silver, but silence is golden." I think the harps in the new Jerusalem are never so golden as when nobody strikes their chords. Did you ever ask yourself when it was that according to the Book of Revelation there was "silence in heaven for the space of half an hour." It was when the seventh seal was opened and the prayers of the saints ascended as incense to the Father. In other words, the moment of silence was the moment of ecstatic praise; thanksgiving expressed itself in speechless adoration. There are members of the choir invisible who at times cannot sing—not because they have hung their harps upon the willows, but because they see no willows on which to hang them; they are too full of joy to sing; the fulness of their joy makes it unspeakable.

My soul, do not underrate thyself because thou art a silent member of God's choir! There are those that can lead in prayer; there are those

that can expound Scripture; there are those that can sing to the sick; there are those that can teach Sunday-schools. Honour their gift of speech, esteem it, reverence it! But never forget that there is also a gift of silence! I have read that the light struck Saul of Tarsus blind; remember, the same light may have struck thee dumb. There is a love which cannot tell its dearest of the depth that lies within it. It feels that any speech would be so inadequate as to be equivalent to denial; therefore it keeps silent. Hast thou pondered the comfort of the thought that the Father "seeth in secret." I know thou hast pondered the *terror* of the thought. I have heard thee say a thousand times, "What an awful reflection it is that the sins which men do not see are open to the eye of my Father!" Yes, but what of the *virtues* men do not see! Remember, there is an unspoken goodness as well as an unspoken evil. Thou hast powers within thee for which the world gives thee no credit. Thou hast love which cannot lavish itself; trust which cannot tell itself; sympathy which cannot shed itself. Thou hast a fervour that does not flow, a gladness that does not glow, a strength that does not show. Thy rose is underground; thy goodness is unfound; thy music has no sound.

Can there be any greater rest than the faith in the All-seeing, All-hearing! The light thou canst not radiate has been reflected. The enthusiasm thou canst not articulate has been re-echoed. The love thou canst not imprint on the canvas has been photographed on the air of heaven, and thy joy, though unspeakable, is full of glory.

The Sweetening of the Mind in Sorrow

"Lest any root of bitterness trouble you."—HEB. XII. 15.

THERE is a great difference between feeling a thing deeply and feeling a thing bitterly; in other words, between the waters of affliction and the waters of Marah. I would express the difference by saying that in the waters of bitterness there is always more or less a sense of having received personal injustice. A man may endure the deepest grief not only without a sense of injustice, but with a firm conviction that he has deserved it; I should call these tears the waters of penitence. Or he may endure deep grief with a firm conviction that he will see light some day; I should call these tears the waters of the cup of Gethsemane. But there is a third way in which he may meet sorrow; he may see his own image in the stream and weep over it; I should call these tears the waters of Marah or bitterness. I should define the feeling of bitterness as "self-pity." It is sorrow for oneself as

distinguished from grief for a catastrophe. It is a sense of personal injury, of unjust humiliation, of individual wrong received. When a man gets this feeling he abandons everything; like Esau, he sells his birthright. He gives up the race of life—refuses to run in a competition where, according to him, nobody gets justice. There have been more men lost to the world by a sense of personal injury than by all the sorrows of time which originated in other causes. The bereavement of Bethany may in itself help Martha's work; but she will be apt to abandon *all* work if she is allowed to say, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died"—for that is bitterness. It is this bitterness, this tendency to self-pity, that more than all other states of mind the Bible is eager to counteract. That is why before even healing a calamity it seeks to sweeten the mind of the sufferer. That is why it gives the preliminary address to the afflicted one, "Son, daughter, be of good cheer!" That is why before the cure it puts the question, "Hast thou faith to be healed?" That is why it sends the wages before the work is done, and ere the prodigal has time to feel his humility greets him with the music and the dance, the ring and the robe.

Lord, save me from self-pity—the root of

bitterness! There is only one way in which I can be saved from pitying myself—by the power to pity others. I see the prophet Elijah in great spiritual danger, because in danger of bitterness. He is complaining in Thy presence that he alone has served Thee, and that he alone has suffered. And I hear Thine answer to his complaining: "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal." It is as if Thou hadst said, "Elijah, do not pity yourself! Do not say that you are the only sufferer in Israel! You are one of seven thousand. Why in the contemplation of your own case do you forget the seven thousand! Why do you feel only your personal pain? Transform your self-pity into pity for the seven thousand! Lift the burden of the multitude! Come out from your own cave! Cease to think only of yourself and your individual sorrows! Throw yourself into the bosom of humanity! and the bitterness will vanish." My Father, may I ever hear that voice of Thine, for in it Thou art speaking to *me!* I am complaining in my little cave of the thunder and earthquake and fire. I am forgetting that there are seven thousand outside to whom the thunder also rolls, to whom the earth also trembles, to whom the fire also brings pain. Wake me into their sorrow,

O Lord! Show me not merely the cup, but its passing from hand to hand! Let bitterness be lost in brotherhood! Let frettedness be lost in fellowship! Let personal soreness be lost in sympathy! May the anger be sunk in the anthem, the complaint drowned in the concord, the rebellious spirit stilled in the symphony of kindred souls! Then will it be with me as with Job—my bitterness will be healed when I have prayed for my friends.

The Condition Requisite for Divine Outpouring

"When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place."—ACTS II. 1.

WHEN you ask the outpouring of any gift by God, there is one thing you must carefully consider—whether you are asking in harmony with the universal need. As a preliminary to all prayer you must stand "in one place" with humanity, must be of one heart with your brother man. The gift of God will not descend upon any soul as long as that soul views itself as a mere individual. On the very threshold of prayer you must be able to say, "*Our* Father, which art in heaven." If you start with the invocation, "*My* Father," you have no guarantee that you are praying in accord with your brethren. I hear men distinguish between prayer for secular things and prayer for spiritual things. It is a true distinction; but it does not lie where it is thought to lie. Two men go up into the temple to pray. The one says, "I am told that prayer is an omnipotent

power; let me ask something which will be an advantage to myself. I will ask God to make me a great preacher of the Gospel. It would be a grand thing to have the crowds flocking after me —to be the admired of all observers, to see the sons of fortune swayed by me, the daughters of beauty and fashion hanging on my words; I must beseech my Father for that boon." Now, the gift this man desires is a purely inward one. It is an increase of intellect, emotion, fervour, passion, poetic power. And yet he is about to offer a purely secular prayer. He is not standing "in one place" with his brother man. He is not considering how his preaching gift will affect the masses; he is contemplating only how it will influence himself. He has asked an enrichment of the spirit; but it is for the benefit of the flesh. He would be content to sacrifice much of the world to gain his object; yet his object is itself worldly, individual, personal. The second man in the temple says, "The thing I should like above all others is riches. How I desire to be rich! What good I could do with money! How many hearts could I cheer, how many homes could I comfort! I could clothe poverty, I could soothe pain, I could dispel ignorance, I could spread missions, I could build churches, I could lodge

outcasts; give me wealth, O Lord!" Here is a prayer for a purely outward thing—a thing which is commonly viewed as the world's leading symbol. Yet the prayer is intensely spiritual, sacred, divine. The man has said, "*Our* Father." He is thinking of the common need. He utters a cry for his race. He asks power, not to blaze, but to bless. He stands in the public place and prays for Man.

O Thou who hearest from whatever spot it may be uttered the cry of Thine own Spirit, in my hour of prayer make Thy Spirit mine! May it be the Spirit of Pentecost—the speaking of a common tongue! Let me stand in the place where humanity stands; make my cry an echo! Let me measure my prayer, not by what I ask, but by whom I ask it for! I would not be a privileged soul. I would not stand upon the hill and bask amid Thy sunbeams if my brother were down in the shadows. I think the light would blind me if it were seen by me alone. Could I walk even through this present world if I alone were possessed of sight! Nay, my Father; its sun would smite me; its woods would wound me; its flowers would fret me; its trees would torture me; its brooks would bruise me; its rivers would wring my heart; its oceans would overflow with my pity; its hills would be heavy with my grief; its

stars would be stains on my comfort; its rainbow would be a reflex of my tears. I can understand my Lord's cry to Thee, "Father, I will that these whom Thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." I, like Him, would have no exclusive glory. I, like Him, would be one with my brethren. I, like Him, would pray, "Give *us* our daily bread." I, like Him, would desire no cup which I could not pass from hand to hand. I, like Him, would empty myself of every joy till the servant's form had shared it. Let this mind be in me which was also in Christ Jesus; let me stand "in one place" with my brother-man!

The Mark for Recognising God's Peace

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee."—Isa. xxvi. 3.

It is not said, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is *stayed.*" There is nothing in mere movelessness which is suggestive of peace. A mind may be motionless without being rested; nay, it may be motionless by reason of its unrest. What, for example, is the numbness of despair but just a mind which has been deprived of movement by its own unrest. Grief by its excess has stopped the pulses of feeling; fear has paralysed energy; inward struggle has ended in inward exhaustion. Or what, again, is the calm of satiety but just a deadness produced by unrest. Passion has been worn out by the strength of its own pinion; the sense of pleasure has been blunted by the excess of its own exercise. In the peace of a human soul everything depends on the thing which fastens it. There are various kinds of fastenings by which a spirit may be bound. It may be bound by sleep; it may be bound by apathy; it may be bound by

old age. The peace of which the psalmist speaks is that of a soul bound by God; its perfection lies in the fact that it is stayed on something which is itself constantly moving. What would be the difference between a soul bound to a rock and a soul bound to a star? The soul fastened to the rock would be stationary; the soul fastened to the star would be ever on the wing. That is the difference between the peace of God and the world's peace. The world's peace is a standing still; God's is a moving on. The world's peace is silence; God's is a living voice. The world's peace is a sedative; God's is a flash of high spirits. The world's peace is languor after toil; God's is inspiration of strength to *begin* toil. The world's peace is in the wilderness; God's is on the waves of life's sea. The world's peace dulls pain by diminishing the power to feel; God's dulls pain by news of coming joy. To be stayed by God is to be stayed not by death but by life, not by exhaustion but by energy, not by folding the hands but by spreading the sails to reach a wider sphere. The peace of God descends on every man as it descended on Jesus—in the midst of the waters.

Come to my waters, O Dove of Inward Rest; it is *there* I would be stayed by Thee. The peace

which Thou bringest is the only peace for me just because it can *exist* upon the waters. There is a peace which is only for the wilderness—for the hour of solitude, for the place where man is not. But my life is not spent in the wilderness, is not meant to be spent there. Its dwelling is among rocks; its home is the place of waves. No peace can keep me which does not meet me there and abide with me there. I remember that Divine aspiration of my Lord, "I pray not that Thou wouldst take them out of the world." He did not want me to be removed from the waters of conflict; He knew that my moral life was there. What He desired for me was something to comfort me *on* the waters, to keep me afloat, to hold me firm. Therefore, my Father, my prayer shall be that Thy heavens shall be opened on the banks of Jordan—that river where the multitude meet, where the crowds bathe. May Thy holy dove descend in the place of concourse, in the scene of conflict! Send Thy peace where my heart pulsates—not where it is still! Send Thy calm where my life is crowded—not where it is untrammelled! Send Thy rest where I am running—not where I am asleep! Send Thy strength where I am struggling—not where I am listless! Send Thy joy where things are jarring—not where

monotony reigns! Send Thy light to the heart that is laden, Thy song to the soul that is sightless, Thy wing to the life that is weary, Thy rest to the bosom that is ruffled, Thy hope to the step that is heavy, Thy faith to the mind that is faint! I shall know the peace to be from Thee when it comes to me on the waters.

The Love that is not Irascible

"Charity is not easily provoked."—1 Cor. xiii. 5.

Paul is speaking of Christian love as contrasted with romantic love. The peculiarity of romantic love is that it is very easily provoked indeed. It is the victim of constant jealousy. It is really the love of one's self—the love of being loved; and any smile bestowed upon another arouses its indignation. But Christian love has nothing to do with the wish to be loved again and therefore nothing to do with jealousy. It seeks no return for its own sake—only for Christ's sake. If there is no response to my efforts after your moral benefit, there is on my part regret, but no personal enmity. I lament a failure in the influence of the Kingdom of God, but not a failure in my own power of attraction; Christian love is "not easily provoked." Yet I would not have you think the reason to be the proverbial one that love is blind. Romantic love is often blind to the moral fault of its object, Christian love never.

The feeling of which Paul speaks is one which sees faults magnified—sees them not as they are, but as, if not checked, they will come to be. There is no eye so trained to detect faults as the eye of pure affection. The stranger may see only a symmetrical building; but he who watches for your soul will detect irregularities in the workmanship and discover flaws in the structure. Why, then, is Christian love not easily provoked; if the faults are more patent to it, why is not the perceiving heart more ruffled? It is because Christian love can do something which nothing else in the world can do; it can repeat the incarnation of the Master. Paul says that Christ took "the likeness of sinful flesh"—put Himself in the circumstances of those who have gone astray. Every Christian is in this respect made to follow his Lord. When a man gets the love of Christ he has to empty himself of his own glory. He has to cast himself down from the pinnacle of his temple into the roar of street and alley, the struggle for bread, the conflict for survival, the storm and stress of life. He has to cast himself down into his brother's environment—to feel his weakness, to experience his helplessness, to measure the strength of his temptations. He has to cast himself down into the stream of his

brother's heredity—to learn the power of long-seated corruption, to estimate the force of an impure fountain. That is why Christian love is not easily provoked. Before it sees the fault it feels the frailty; before it marks the waste it measures the wave; before it apportions the blame it allows for the influence of ancestral blood.

Lord, in the sight of human sin I am often stirred to the cry for vengeance. One of Thy disciples tells me that there were men in heaven who said, "How long dost Thou not avenge Thine own elect!" and he adds, "There were given unto them white robes." When I am thus provoked I too need Thy white robe—the robe of love. I shall never cease to be provoked until I get love's power—power to incarnate the self in the lives of the lower. Give me that power, O God! As Thou hast sent Thy Son, even let Him send me! Let me live for one hour in the experience of those beneath me! Let me be clothed in their humility, let me put on their weakness! Give me a moment in their manger, a day in their desert, a step on their stormy sea! Give me a sense of their faintness as they rebel against their cross on the Dolorous Way! Give me a sense of their privation as they yield to a voice saying,

"Command that the stones be made bread!" Give me a sense that the flesh is weak and the burden strong, that the will is wayward and the temptation keen, that the ship is small and the sea tempestuous! Let me live in the heart of the humble; let me dwell in the soul of the sightless; let me walk in the lair of the leper; let me tread in the den of the demoniac; let me consider the friendlessness of the fallen before they fell! Then shall I bear on my breast the world's sin; then shall my spirit be provoked no more.

The Directing of the Early Mind

"They brought young children to Him, that He should touch them."—MARK X. 13.

"THAT He should touch them"—not simply "that they should touch Him." This latter was quite unnecessary. Touching is the metaphor for influence. There was no difficulty in the heart of Jesus being touched by the children; but it was extremely difficult to arrange that the heart of the children should be touched by Jesus. It is easy for the developed mind to understand the child—the developed mind has itself been a child and retains a memory of its beginning. But it is not at all easy for the child to understand the developed mind—that is a stage still in its future. Yet it is by higher models that the child must be touched if it is to have any mental growth. It is not enough that it should be thrown into the company of its equals. Two children of equal age and capacity might play for ever in the Garden of Eden without rising a step higher, if there were not heard betimes a more mature voice

walking through the garden in the cool of the day. And I would add that, the more mature the new voice is, the better will it be for the child. A boy's best chance of growth is in associating with people already grown. If you want to make him a poet, do not point him to the model of the village rhymester. Point him to the greatest. It is always the voice of the Lord God that develops young Adam. Those beings inferior to himself would not do; those equal to himself would not do; those a little better than himself would not do. If you want him to progress, point him to a model at the top of the two trees—the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. Let him climb for the highest apples, even though he get a fall in the process. The highest has more touch with the lowest than any intermediate has. The element of childhood remains in the greatest. The perfected soul gathers up its past. It has many mansions in its nature and it prepares a place for all surmounted stages. It can understand the child better than the youth can, for it has a mansion for childhood—which the youth has not. The youth is ever pressing onward and upward; he fain would forget. But the mature soul goes back. It lives in sympathy with the things beneath it. There is no model so fitted to

the heart of the child as that which is planted at the summit of the hill.

Parents of the coming generation, bring your children to Jesus! I speak not in the voice of the Churches, I speak not in the name of the Creeds, I speak not in the phrase of religious revivalism. I speak in the interest of the schoolmaster, in the interest of education, in the interest of social development. The mothers of Galilee made a shrewd choice for their model. They came not with their children to Peter, or James, or John; they sought not to kindle them by Andrew or Philip or Nathaniel. They went up to the highest—to Jesus. Ye mothers of England, be not less shrewd than they! Would you kindle the inspiration of your children, beware of the torch to which you bring them. Do not say, "They are very small lives, and therefore a very little will do it." Do not lead them to a wax match or a taper or a candle. Small lives need the greatest heat to fan them into flame. Seek for them nothing less than the sun—bear them into the presence of Jesus. They will learn all things from Him—the beauties of the field and the pity of the heart and the fervour of the mind. Cæsar will not teach them such courage; Socrates will not show them such

calmness; David will not impress them with such chivalry; Moses will not inspire them with such meekness; Elijah will not imbue them with such earnestness; Daniel will not touch them with such manliness; Job will not nerve them with such patience; Paul will not fire them with such love. They will climb to the top of the mansion quicker than they will scale the ladder on a neighbouring wall; bring them first to the mountain; point them to Jesus.

The Distinctiveness of Christian Morality

"He answered and said unto Him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus said unto him, One thing thou lackest: sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor."—MARK X. 20, 21.

THESE are the words of that young man who won the love of Jesus before he had embraced the cause of Jesus. It is something to know that one can win the love of Christ before he calls himself a Christian—that the Divine eye recognises a virtue conferred by nature as well as a virtue derived from grace. But let that pass. The question the young man asked was really this: In what respect does Christianity differ from the Ten Commandments? What is there in your doctrine that can give it a more permanent life than can be claimed by these precepts of Moses? He tells Jesus that, so far as his consciousness goes, he has kept undeviatingly the law of these commandments. He has given to every one his due. He has obeyed his parents; he has abstained

from all bodily violence; he has been free from fraud; he has given no false testimony; he has yielded to no immoral desires. He asks what more can be wanted to make him a Christian. The answer of Christ is striking, "Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor." If we would see its significance, we must look at the spirit, and not the mere form, of the words. Let me try to paraphrase what our Lord means: "You say you have given to every one his due. It is well; I admit your integrity in this respect. But is this the measure of all possible integrity? Is it the climax of goodness when a man can say that he has rendered to every one his due? It is the climax of *justice;* but is justice the highest step on the ladder of goodness? No; there is a step beyond justice—generosity. It is not enough that you give to your brother what he has a legal right to; you must impart to him that to which he has no legal right. It is comparatively easy to remember him in the things wherein he is rich —in the things which are his own. But to remember him when he is poor, to sympathise with him in that which he is in want of—that is difficult. You have done well to respect his person, to keep your hands from his property, to abstain from calumniating his name. But after

all, that is only a *refraining* of the hand. Is there to be no outstretching of the hand! Are you content with doing your brother no wrong! Is there no good that you can do him! You have not killed your brother; but have you enlarged his life! You have not stolen; but have you added to his store! You have not defamed; but have you spread his virtues! You have brought him no domestic dispeace; but have you brought him domestic joy! You have refused to covet his possessions; but have you ever coveted possessions *for him!* If not, there remaineth for you a rest that is still unachieved."

Lord, it is not enough for me that I have washed my robes; I must make them white in the Blood of the Lamb—in the stream of sacrifice. There are souls which, touching the outward law, are blameless. Their robes are white; but they are not sacrificial. They have done their neighbour no hurt; but they have borne him no blessing. Not such whiteness be mine, O Lord! It "lacks" something. It means only the washing in innocence—in harmlessness. I should like to be washed in blood—in sacrifice. Not by self-restraint would I be made pure, but rather by *un*-restraint—not by the wall, but by the wing. I will not pray, "Bind my hands that I hurt not

my brother"; my cry will be, "Loose my hands that I may *serve* him." I will not pray, "Save me from trespassing on my neighbour's ground"; my cry will be, "Let my ground be open to my neighbour." I will not pray, "Keep me from envying his possession of fair flowers"; my cry will be, "May the flowers that are mine be *shared* by him." I will not pray, "Preserve me from the passion of Cain"; my cry will be, "Fill me with the passion of Christ—the passion for the life of the world." I will not pray, "Make me content with my own"; my cry will be, "Let me call nothing my own, but everything a lease for the lavishing of love." I will not pray, "Number me among the spirits of just men"; my cry will be, "Number me among the spirits of just men made perfect." Expand justice into generosity, and I shall "lack" no more.

The Unexpected Recipients of a Heavenly Reward

"And not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."—2 Tim. iv. 8.

This is to my mind a very peculiar passage. It contains an idea which is strikingly original and deserves marked attention. Paul has been saying that all through his Christian life he has been a man of faith—has kept undimmed his belief in the coming of a great revelation which shall make all things clear, and, as the result of his faith, he expects that in the future God will place a crown on his head. But suddenly he goes on to say that this crown will not be confined to the man of unclouded faith; it will be shared also by the man of unclouded love. What he says I take to be this, "God has laid up a crown of righteousness to recompense my faith in His appearing; but He has also a crown for those who have only loved His appearing—who have never been able to make it a matter of steadfast faith; there are men who

shall receive a crown for the mere wish of their hearts that Christ's kingdom may come." Consider this utterance of Paul. There are three ways in which I may be affected towards the appearing of Christ—faith, hope, or love. I may have a clear vision of His approach—I may see in anticipation the King in His beauty; this is faith. I may have a dim vision of His approach—I may behold but momentary glimpses in a cloudy sky; this is hope. I may have no vision at all of His approach—hope itself may have died within me; yet, in the place where faith and hope should dwell, there may be a great longing for His light; this is love—the love of His appearing. Paul says that even this *absence* of dogmatic assurance will receive its crown of glory. It has seen no star in the east, it has heard no bells across the snow; yet it has mirrored Christ in its dreams, and its heart has vibrated in the night. There are men who have washed their robes in mere love. Their faith is clouded, their hope is dim; the Christ is shadowed to the eye. But to the heart He is not shadowed; love reigns. And love purifies. It holds the Christ before the soul even where He is absent from the sight; the vision of His Cross in the soul becomes in the life the vindication of His crown.

My Father, who are these that are arrayed in

white robes and whence came they? I can understand why *others* should be clothed in white. I can understand why the pure garment should be worn by the convinced—by those who hear the approach of Thy chariot wheels. I can understand why the white robe should cover the sanguine—those who listen for the chariot which as yet they do not hear. But why should there be a garment for those who are not even listening for Thy chariot—who have not faith enough or hope enough to strain the ear! Thou hast revealed the mystery, O Lord. It is because there is another vision of Thee than either faith or hope; it is love. It is because when I cannot see Thine appearing or expect Thine appearing I can love Thine appearing. I thank Thee that Thou hast white robes for love—a crown of righteousness laid up for those who have only seen Thee by the heart. I thank Thee that in Thy precious sacrifice a man can wash his robes by night—the night of intellectual obscurity. I thank Thee that, when the cloud has received Thy Christ out of my sight, and when He can no longer rule my reason, He can still lodge in my love and beautify my life. Let this be my comfort, Lord, when the sun is low! In the hour when faith is feeble and the wing of hope is heavy, tell me

that *love* can crown me, that the song of the heart can atone! Tell me that the roll of Thy disciples is larger than the communion roll, that the names written in heaven exceed the names signed on earth! Tell me that, when the sons of faith have been rewarded and the sons of hope have been recompensed, there will remain to be distributed a third series of prizes—the crowns of those who have loved Thine appearing!

The Divine Optimism

"Mercy rejoiceth against judgment."—JAMES II. 13.

THERE are, I think, three states of the human heart — love, hatred, and lovelessness. Love is attraction; hatred is repulsion; lovelessness is equilibrium or indifference. Love is hot; hatred is cold; lovelessness is lukewarm. Love is the sense of day; hatred is the feeling of night; lovelessness is congenital blindness—the absence of any feeling *either* of day or night. Each of these states has a separate tendency. Lovelessness is indifference to a man's good or evil; it neither rejoices in judgment nor in mercy. Hatred seeks out the bad quality in a man; it rejoices in judgment but not in mercy. Love seeks the good quality in a man; it rejoices in mercy but not in judgment. Now, St. James says that this last is the *Divine* ideal—the condition of the heart of God. The paradox of the statement lies in the thought that the being who has the keenest perception of sin should least have the wish to judge it. Yet there is nothing strange in this. The master in photography is more alive to a

disagreeable expression of countenance than the tyro is. Yet on that very account he is far less apt than the tyro to photograph the sitter at this particular point. His very sense of shrinking from anything not beautiful will make him refuse to take the impression at this stage. The greater the artist be, the less we have to fear being represented in our worst light; it is the *poor* artist that makes us tremble. You and I are sitting to-day to the Divine Artist. He sees every flaw in our face and figure as no brother man can see them, and they impress Him more repulsively than they will affect any brother man. But just because of that, we are safer in His hands. He sees the flaw and judges it, but He will not let this be His final judgment. His mercy rejoices over His judgment. He says: "I will not close the sitting at this point. I will wait for another expression, a better expression, an expression which shall more satisfy my sense of beauty." *That* is my safety in the presence of the Divine Painter—His horror of the flaw. The human painter may close his sitting at the moment of the blemish, because he feels less the majesty of face and form; but the Divine Artist calls for an arrest of judgment, and suspends the process in the hope of better things.

O Thou in whose searching light I sit for my

portrayal, how shall I appear! In that searching light, where shall I find comfort! In the very fact of its searchingness, O my God. My brother's light may fail to detect a small stain, but it will also fail to detect a small virtue. Thou, O Father, shalt see my sin in the bud, but Thou shalt also see my grace in the germ. I would not fly from Thy microscope even if I could. No glass but Thine can count my grains of gold. Thou seest my flower when it is yet but a faith. Thou hearest my prayer when it is yet but a plaint. Thou acceptest my sacrifice when it is yet but a sympathy. Thou readest my confession when it is yet but a cry. Thou receivest my worship when it is yet but a wish. Thou discernest a torrent of grief in my one tear, a storm of penitence in my single sigh, a river of life in my mere unrest. The virgin mother cried, "He that is mighty hath magnified me." I too am magnified in Thy glass, O Lord. My box of ointment becomes Christ's burial wreath. My cup of water given to a man is seen as a gift to *Thee*. While my life is still in swaddling bands Thou singest over me the songs of Bethlehem; while my heart is still in a manger Thou layest at my feet the treasures of a king. Thy mercy rejoices over judgment; Thou art more glad of the gold than of the grey.

The Comfort of God's Omnipresence

"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea: even there Thy right hand shall hold me."—PSALM CXXXIX. 9, 10.

THE greatest comfort to all hours of separation is the idea of God. When you are to be divided from a friend by an earthly sea there can be no deeper solace than the thought that you and he are to be really within the hollow of a single hand —that, while unable to touch one another, you will be in the presence of one who is touching you both. And when there comes the separation of that widest sea — death, there is again no solace so deep as that. At such a time what do I want to know? Is it whether the streets of heaven are paved with gold? Is it whether the songs of heaven are rich in music? Is it whether the work of heaven is wrought by angels? It is none of these things. It is whether in this vast universe beyond the earth there is anything which can connect my life with the life of my departed brother. What a comfort to be told that, with all

our seeming separation, we are still inmates of the same house—the house of God ! That is just what the psalmist says. He says that absolute separation between two souls is an impossibility—that the wings of the morning can never lift us outside the gates of God. If you had departed into the far-off land and I, lingering here, had a message to send you, I should not, like Adelaide Proctor, make *music* the medium of transmission. That would be wireless telegraphy; the song might reach the wrong quarter. But if I knew there was an invisible being in the universe who, spite of the poles of distance, had one hand on me and the other on you, I should find my medium of communication in *him.* I should say, "Convey into the heart of my friend the impression that he is still remembered by me, still loved by me, still longed for by me." If a man feels himself in contact with God, he is in contact with all worlds. I once heard an old woman express great confidence that she would meet her departed husband beyond the grave. Experimenting on her understanding, I said, "Of course, in that vast district it may take some time to find him." She answered, "It will need no time; I shall just ask Christ to *take* me to my husband, and He will take me at once." With all its crudeness and primitiveness, the answer was

on the lines of Herbert Spencer. If all the forces of the universe are the parts of one central Force, that central Force can at any moment unite them all; the wings of the morning can do nothing to divide.

O Thou that bridgest every sea which separates soul from soul, my bereaved love looks to *Thee.* Unto whom can it go but unto Thee! What other presence connects me with my departed! Shall I give my message to the winds!—they may leave it with the barren rocks. Shall I entrust it to the sea!—the sea reaches not beyond the earth. Shall I commit it to a song!—the songs of heaven may render mine mute. But I can give it to *Thee.* Thou art the only presence that annihilates distance — that *pursues* the wings of the morning. Sometimes when I meet one deemed far away, I say, "The world is small." Thou makest all worlds small, O my Father—small as the hollow of Thy hand. Death itself cannot separate what is in the hollow of Thy hand. Do I not cry to Thee on earth to hear my aspirations; if Thou canst hear them Thou canst transmit them. Thou touchest *me here,* and my brother yonder; Thou art the medium from my soul to his. I commit my message to *Thee;* I launch it on the bosom of Thy love. Carry it in Thine own way; if Thou

holdest worlds in the hollow of Thy hand, it has not far to go. Bear it on the wings of thought! Breathe it into the breast of my brother! Kindle it by connection; inspire it by instinct; suggest it by sympathy; waft it by inward whisperings; proclaim it by presentiment; speak it by strength instilled; convey it through experience of comfort! I shall have great confidence if I send my letter by *Thee.*

The Nature of Divine Revelation

"By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."—2 Cor. iv. 2.

The thought clearly is that a revelation ought not to be purely original. "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience" means "commending ourselves to every man's consciousness." What Paul wishes to say is that Divine truth, like every other truth, must speak to experience, appeal to something already known. It is a point worthy of all observation. The common view is that a Divine revelation must be something wholly new, that if God ever speaks to man it will be to tell him what he never heard before. Would that be your idea of the greatness of a *human* revelation? You sometimes say of a sermon, "It was very fresh; it came to me like a revelation." But what do you mean by that? That it was a novelty? Exactly the reverse—that it was an unexpected recognition. A fresh thought is a thought which is suddenly discovered by the drawing aside of a veil. It has been lying there all the time, but the veil covered it. Your finding is, in the literal

sense of the word, a *discovery*—a removal of something which has been lying on the top of the thought and has prevented you from seeing it. When you do see it, you recognise it as a part of your own property, a thing which naturally belongs to you and which you should never have been without. It comes to you not as a strange but as a familiar object; the freshness consists in the fact that it was there while you did not know it. Now, Paul says that it is the same with the truth of God. It is a Divine manifestation, but it commends itself to the consciousness—appeals to the experience. Does not the very word "revelation" mean the drawing aside of a veil. It is not the creation of something new, but the uncovering of something old — something which has been wrapped in a napkin for years, which has been lying close to our hand through the whole course of our lives, and which never for a moment did we believe to be there. What God's light reveals is myself. There was a mirror in my room all through the night, and I knew it not; I thought the spot where it stood blank space. But the sun rose and taught me my own splendour, and the glory without was caught by the glass within, and the morning ray became the reflection of my heart, and in the light of God I beheld my life as man.

Lord, let me not forget that Thou hast a separate voice for separate souls—a voice for the "consciousness of every man"! Let me not forget that though Thy light speaks to all it has not the same ray for each! I have no right to ask that my brother's mirror shall reflect the same things as mine. Thou shinest into separate rooms—into the consciousness of each man, and the rooms are all differently furnished. Shall I insist that my brother's room be mirrored as my own! Elijah has his table spread in the wilderness; what he needs from Thee is a human voice; therefore Thou sendest him a friend. Peter gets food in his dreams —by the sheet let down from heaven; what he needs from Thee is a waking to reality; therefore Thou sendest him a rough sea. John lives in the fire of expectancy—in the hope of an immediate seat at Thy right hand; what he needs from Thee is the calmness to wait; therefore Thou sendest him a long journey. Paul has had too much light —is apt to underrate a brother's difficulty; what he needs from Thee is a sense of human weakness; therefore Thou sendest him a thorn. Matthew has had too *many* thorns — has met everywhere obloquy, contempt, scorn; what he needs from Thee is a flower; therefore Thou sendest him the revelation of Thy presence in a feast. I thank

Thee not only that Thou knockest at every door, but that Thine is a varied knocking ; Thou callest Martha into the silence, Thou meetest Mary at the social board. Thou suppliest my life, not where it is strong, but where it is weak; Thou reachest my consciousness where I am conscious of want.

The Irrepressible Evidence of a Divine Origin

"Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go."—JOHN VIII. 14.

I UNDERSTAND our Lord to mean that one who has in him the blood of a lofty lineage cannot help revealing himself. The presence of Jesus even where it was silent exercised a commanding power. His enemies said, "How is this air of dignity compatible with your profession of the absence of self-consciousness, 'Thou bearest record of thyself; thy witness of a voluntary humility cannot be true.'" Jesus answers: "It is just because I am utterly unconscious of Myself that My lineage shines through Me. If I were on guard, if I were studying to conceal, I might keep it from appearing. But because there is no thought of self, because My heart is moving naturally and spontaneously, the secret of My birth comes out and My origin is revealed." Now, even in natural life this is a principle which can easily be verified. Every man of high breeding, in his unconscious moments,

bears record of himself. I should say he never does so with such strength as in his unconscious moments. When he is off guard, when he is bent on some intense aim, when his thoughts are far away from the mode of his own action, that mode will reveal itself as an attitude of grace. He may be lifting a chair for your benefit and for your benefit alone; yet, in the act of impersonal kindness the personal dignity may appear. When a man is born of Christ's Spirit it will be impossible for him to conceal his origin. It will shine out everywhere, but never so much as when he is engaged in matters seemingly foreign to himself. It will not be only in reading the Bible or in uttering a prayer that the secret of his birth will be manifest. It will be an irrepressible secret. It will shine in things called secular, in scenes called worldly. Men will give it worldly names. They will say, "What a fine manner he has!"—"What perfect culture he has!"—they will attribute to the gardener the resurrection which comes from the Lord. The secret of your Christian birth will come out in your countenance, in your gait, in your gesture, in your music, in your business, in your converse, in your very mode of conducting an argument. Christ cannot be buried—not even in a human

heart; on the third day He will rise again and reveal Himself in outward things—on the dusty road to Emmaus and on the bosom of life's fretting sea.

Lord, let me breathe Thine upper air—the air of Thy Spirit! If once I breathe it I shall no more go out. I do not say I shall no more come down. I want to come down. I do not wish to linger in the tabernacle of the mount when a sufferer is waiting on the plain; I am glad that the cloud should cover the tabernacles, and send me down. But I would carry down along with me the mountain air; I would carry down along with me the mountain radiance. Moses carried Thy light to the foot of the hill; so would I. I would not study how to make it shine, any more than Moses did; I would put on, like him, a veil of self-forgetfulness. But I know that the veil will not hide it; in spite of myself I shall bear record "whence I came and whither I go." Let me not be anxious about seeking religious spheres; may I touch all spheres and make them rosy with Thy light! May I be religious without knowing it —always, everywhere! May I leave Thy sunbeams where I dream not! May I plant Thy flowers where I deem not! May I send Thy message where I seem not! May I tell of Christ

unconsciously when I mean to speak of common things! May I describe heaven unwittingly when I discourse only of mart and lane! May my presence breathe Thy peace, my happiness Thy hope, my fervour Thy faith, my cheerfulness Thy charity, my pity Thy pardon, my munificence Thy mercy, my generosity Thy gentleness, my tenderness the travail of Thy soul! In the streets of busy life, in the scenes of garish day, let me bear unconscious record of the height from which I came!

Compensation

"Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds!"—JOB XXXVII. 16.

THESE words were spoken by Elihu—one of the five actors in the drama of the Book of Job. Before he gave his opinion, two other opinions had been advanced as to the government of God. The first was that of Job's three critics—Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. They represented God as very stern to the sinner. The second was that of Job. He said that the clouds of life were so unequally distributed as to lead to the conclusion that joy and pain were irrespective of goodness or badness. He thought that the clouds fell indiscriminately on the evil and the righteous. But Elihu steps forward with a third theory. He turns to Job and says: "Admitting that the clouds fall equally on the evil and the righteous, how does that prove that the righteous *suffer* as much as the evil! Do you know the balancing of these clouds!

Do you imagine that the same calamity falling on two men at the same time must mean the same amount of suffering! Do you not take into account the previous condition of the soul which meets it! Are you not aware that every calamity may be either aggravated or counterbalanced from within! Until you have learned this, you are in no condition to measure the justice of God." And of the three doctrines I agree with that of Elihu. Before I can judge of any calamity I must know whether there is anything to counterbalance it, to compensate it, to weigh against it. I have seen children playing in squalid lane and wretched alley, oblivious of the mean environment; they were blinded to the pain by their own buoyancy. I have seen the soldier unconscious of weary marches; he forgot fatigue in the ardour of his cause. I have seen the student pass hours without food and nights without repose; the inward fire burned up hunger and consumed the need of sleep. I have heard the martyr in the agonies of death cry to his fellow-sufferers, "Be of good cheer; we shall kindle a torch that will never be extinguished!" In all these cases there was a counterbalancing of the cloud. Without the inward counterpoise the poverty would have repelled, the march exhausted, the abstinence

killed, the martyrdom unmanned. But the cloud was balanced by a ray of glory.

Lord, balance my clouds; let them not be allowed to outweigh my joys! I dare not ask an exemption from the cloud, for Thou makest the clouds Thy chariots. But I do ask its balancing —the counteraction by an inward joy. Give wings to my heart, that at the time of the cloud it may fly to a flower! Thou hast never left my garden *without* a flower. Never have I seen an absolute winter in the heart of man; there is always a rest that "remaineth." In the hour of the cloud, let not mine eye linger on it! Turn my gaze to the joys that are still unfading! Let the rain from the cloud water these joys and make them more precious! Let me know the meaning of the words, "When ye are persecuted in one city, flee into another!" I thank Thee that there is no life in which *all* cities are persecuted—that there is ever a place of refuge to which the spirit can flee. Let not the cloud overbalance me! Lead me to the joy that remaineth! Reveal to me the still unruffled rose! When Thou puttest out the stars, let me hear the nightly song! When Thou bringest the flood, let me see the bow! When Thou wakest the storm, walk Thyself upon the waters! When Thou sendest the cross, bring

beforehand Thy peace! When Thou takest away Rachael, raise up Joseph! When Judas proves a failure and lessens the number of the twelve, point me to the coming Paul! Help me to discern the silver lining in the cloud!

The Cosmopolitanism of the Lord's Prayer

MATT. VI. 9—13.

HAS it ever struck you how representative this prayer is in respect to human want. To my mind its very originality lies in its power to include the old desires of the heart. These six petitions are each the voice of an ancient philosophy or faith; Christ has simply gathered them in. He has counted the scattered cries and made them one choir. The Jew cried, "Hallowed be Thy Name"; he wanted a God whom men could reverence for His holiness—who charged His very angels with folly, who could not look upon sin but with abhorrence. Two empires have cried, "Thy kingdom come"—the Chinese and the Roman; they have seen heaven incarnated on a visible throne. The Brahman has cried, "Thy will be done"; he counts his own will delusion; he wants to lose himself in the Absolute Life. The polytheist of every clime cries, "Give us this day our daily bread"; his whole use of religion is for the needs

of the hour. The Buddhist cries, "Forgive us our debts"; he trembles lest the consequence of sin may be to bring us back after death to lower forms of being. And the Stoic cries, "Lead us not into temptation"; his whole desire is to be free from the vain seductions of life—to ignore its jealousies, to scorn its passions, to laugh at its ambitions, to regard its gains and its losses with equal contempt. These are the cries of the old world; and Christ has said, "Come unto Me and I will give you rest!" He has not sent *one* of them empty away. He has gathered them together as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings; and there will not be one want neglected in His shower of blessings.

O ye who proclaim the Gospel to foreign lands, tell them not that they are foreign to Christ! Tell them that within His Pantheon there is a place for all the cries of the world! Tell them that within the many mansions of His heart there is a room prepared for the desire of every living soul! Bid them all come in, carrying their separate burdens! Bid the secularist bring his cry for daily bread!—it will be answered here. Bid the Brahman bring his cry for vanquished will!—it will be answered here. Bid the Stoic bring his cry for conquered passions!—it will be answered

here. Bid the Roman bring his cry for a Divine kingdom!—it will be answered here. Bid them learn that in Christ they will get more than they cry for! Tell the Jew he will see God's holiness, but that the sight will be softened by debts forgiven! Tell the Brahman he will yield up his will but that the sacrifice will be mitigated by the assurance of daily bread! Tell the Roman he will see the King in His power, but that this power will be exerted in holding him back from temptation! Tell all of them that each of their cries will be better answered because each will receive also an answer to his *brother's* cry! So shall the hearts of all be knit in unity, so shall the last result be not selfishness but sympathy; and the prayer which each will utter shall eventually be the prayer for all—"*Our* Father."

Christ's Disparagement of Apparitions

"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."—LUKE XVI. 31.

I HAVE heard a hundred sermons preached on this text; and the result of them all was unsatisfactory. Not one of them succeeded in rendering even plausible the statement that a rising from the dead would not persuade an unbeliever. But did Christ ever *say* that a rising from the dead would not persuade an unbeliever? Never. The sin of Dives and his five brothers was not unbelief; it was want of charity. That of Dives certainly was. He allowed a beggar to lie at his gates, to feed on the mere crumbs that accident sent from his table, to have his sores ministered to by the very dogs of the street. The family sin seems to have been avarice—the inability to give. Now, no avaricious man could be made less avaricious by an appearing of the dead. An unbeliever would lose his unbelief; an atheist would drop his atheism; a worshipper of matter and force would cry out, "There is a spirit after all!" But

no apparition from the dead could make a selfish man loving. It could make him fly with food and nourishment to the bedside of an invalid—but not for love. He would fly on the wings of fright; he would travel on the steps of trepidation. Many a sceptic who rejects Moses and the prophets would be persuaded by a spiritualistic *séance;* but no man whose pity was not kindled by Moses and the prophets would have it kindled by a spiritualistic *séance.* If his soul was not touched by the child in the Nile river and by all the waifs and strays that have since been there, if his heart was not heavy with the burden of Egypt's slaves and of all the future slaves of loom and factory, if his spirit was not bowed with the weight of the Man of Sorrows and of all the sorrowful souls of which He is the type, in vain would he behold the rending of the tomb—in vain would the tables rap and the furniture move and the solemn message descend; he would not be persuaded!

Lord, I have often asked myself why Thou hast not appeared to me, to solve my doubts in visible form. It is because my doubts are not the main subject of Thy solicitude. The main subject of Thy solicitude is my want of charity to man. Not in my deep sense of mystery, but in my

shallow sense of mercy dost Thou read corruption. If my sin were the sense of mystery, a thousand voices from the sky would speak to give me light, for there could be no cure for mystery like a voice from the sky. But my sin is selfishness, loveless-ness. What voice from the sky would speak to *that!* The voice which speaks to that must be one crying in the wilderness. Send me these wilderness cries, O Christ; wake me to the burdens of Moses! Let me hear the masses crying for the manna! Let me see the wailing crowd beside the bitter waters! Let me view the people stricken by the pestilence! Let me feel the depression of those whose life is a desert! Let me know the weariness of anxious waiting, the languor of a long look-out, the torture of pro-tracted time, the pain of a promised land that does not come, the murmuring that is born of mornings that bring no change, the rebellion of the heart that resents the faintness of the hand! No voices from the sky will equal these.

The Guests at Christ's Own Table

"As Jesus sat at meat in His house, many publicans and sinners sat together with Jesus and His disciples."—MARK II. 15.

THIS is to my mind the most unique passage in the New Testament. It is the only instance I know in which Jesus plays the part of host or entertainer. Everywhere else He is a guest; here, for the first and last time, we meet Him in His own house, at His own table. It was not a communion table. The disciples were there; but publicans and sinners were there too. Around that table there must have been a great diversity of theological opinion. The disciples and the publicans had no dogmas in common; yet they both sat at Christ's board. What enabled them to sit together? We can understand how men can "sit together in heavenly places"—in the sense of a common faith. But what bound in one these souls so different? It was their love for the Son of Man. It was their love for the earthly

Christ—the brother-Christ, the Christ of the street and of the lane. The publicans and sinners were not yet dreaming of salvation. They were seeking no supernatural help. It was the *natural* in Christ which they loved—the voice, the gait, the manner, the countenance. They loved Him for less than He was worth. The private friends of a poet may be unable to appreciate any poetry; yet the man may be very dear to them, and he will accept their outside fondness. So did Jesus accept a love for that which was His least possession. It was a love for something inferior, but it was not an inferior love. Do not measure the strength of love by its cause. Many of these publicans would have gone to the stake as readily as the disciples—though they would have gone for another motive. The love in the disciple was fire on the mount, the love in the publican was fire on the plain; but a fire on the plain may be as hot as a fire on the mount. Jesus saw the difference, but He accepted both.

I thank Thee, O Christ, for this one revelation of Thyself as a social friend. I have seen on Thy head many crowns. I have seen Thee as teacher, healer, saviour. I have seen Thee in the storm, I have seen Thee in the sickroom, I have seen Thee on the cross. But I should have missed

something if there had not been one hour of simple unbending, of mere human brotherhood for its own sake—for itself alone. I bless Thee for this revealing of a purely human hour. We are not all ready for Thy communion bread; we are not all ready for Thy sermon on the hill; we are not even all ready to be fed, like paupers, in the wilderness. But we all understand the brotherhood of man. We all understand the life of the comrade. There may be a fellowship of the heart where there is not fellowship of the spirit. They who have not yet gathered within Thy Church may already sit at meat in Thy house. May Thy disciples be willing to sit beside them there! Let them not refuse the name of Christian to those who as yet are but social guests of Thee! Methinks it is of *these* little children Thou sayest, "Suffer them to come, and forbid them not!" We do not forbid, O Lord. What are *we* that we should refuse to associate with Thy guests! They have never been at the temple; but they have dined at Thy house. Thy house is larger than our temple. Thy table is wider than our communion. Thou hast issued more invitations than we. We ask disciples; Thou biddest the alien. We ask converts; Thou biddest the sinner. We ask the assured; Thou biddest the

doubting. We ask the members; Thou biddest those outside. We ask those who can say, "Thou art the Christ of God"; Thou biddest, in addition to these, those who in wonder cry, "Never man spake like this man!"

Roman Power and Christian Power

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation."—ROM. I. 16.

PAUL always suited his preaching to his hearers. His hearers were at present the Romans. The thing they reverenced above all others was power. Their dislike to Christianity proceeded from its seeming weakness. Paul says they are under a false impression. He declares that Christianity is distinguished by the very element they love—power. He says that even from their own point of view there is nothing in it to be ashamed of, that it has a Roman feature about it—strength. "The power of God unto salvation"—how strange the words must have sounded to the Mistress of the World! Her formula had been, "The power of empire unto destruction"—the power that could crush down all opposition by killing the opponent. But here was a novel mode of power—the crushing of opposition by *conciliating* the opponent. "Do you call that power!" laughed

the Roman; "that is what anybody could do." The Roman was wrong. The greatest power in the world is the power to save a human soul, because, of all things in the world, it is the hardest to do. What! you say, can anything be difficult for the power of God! Yes, one thing—the restraining of that power. And the salvation of a human soul *requires* that. Salvation would be a very easy thing if man could be treated as a star—driven mechanically within a certain orbit and commanded to keep there. He *could* be thus driven, but he could not thus be saved. Salvation demands a *tempering* of the power of God. If I am to be saved, the ship of God must not be in full sail. There must be room for my will, room for my conscience, room for my love. It is this that makes salvation to my Father a source of care. How gladly would He save the drunkard at once—quench his thirst and blunt his craving. But that would be the treatment of a star, not of a man. My Father has to suppress His power, to rein it in. It is a hard thing to rein it in—when He longs so much to say, "Peace, be still!" But this man's tossing is not an ocean to be laid to rest at Divine will; it is a conscious heart, and must be treated as a heart. It is a life, a soul, a spirit; and it must respond to the touch of life and soul

and spirit. It must receive God into its own ship if it wants to see land.

My soul, often hast thou admired the Roman power of conquest. Hast thou considered a power of conquest that is greater still—the power unto salvation. Place before thee these two figures—Cæsar and Christ. Which is the greater conqueror? Hast thou pondered the difference between the subduing of a body and the subduing of a heart? To take captive a body is to imprison it; but to take captive a heart is to release it. To take captive a body is to deprive it of voluntary movement; but to take captive a heart is to give it wings. To take captive a body is to mutilate it, limit it, impair it; but to take captive a heart is to lend it radiance, beauty, charm. To take captive a body is to kill the bird in catching it; but to take captive a heart is to give the bird room in heaven. Thy heart is never free till it is captured. Love is the capture of thy heart. It is the only conquest that enlarges the prisoner. The loveless heart is the pulseless heart. Knowest thou why it is written that Christ makes thee free? It is because thy heart has no freedom till it has a master. It flies by its fetter; it mounts by its manacle; it soars by its surrender; it beams by its bonds; it carols by its cords; it expands by

its enclosure; it deepens by its dependence; it grows young by the sense of its yoke. Thy heart is never so rich as when it is conquered by another; I am not ashamed of subjection to love.

The Spontaneity of True Charity

"He sighed deeply in His spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign?"—MARK VIII. 12.

THE Pharisees had asked Christ for a sign from heaven, that is to say, a sign from the sky. It was as if they had said, "We see a great deal of bodily healing by your hand. Yet, after all, there is nothing supernatural in bodily healing. We all know that mind has influence over body—that faith can strengthen the physical, that hope can aid health, that love can cure lassitude, that novelty can divert from nerves. All this happens quite naturally. But let us see you arrest a star, let us behold you turn the course of a planet, let us witness you bringing the rain after drought or the sunshine after rain, and then we shall believe in you." Now, where lay the sting of this to Jesus; what was there in it that made Him sigh in spirit? Was it because men doubted His power to work a sign in heaven? No; it was because they attributed His benevolence to the desire of

working a sign upon *earth*. Such an imputation would make *any* philanthropist sigh. Imagine a child meeting with an accident when a doctor was passing and that the doctor offered his services. Imagine that the next morning a paragraph appeared in the newspapers stating that he offered his help with a view to manifest his medical skill. Would not this physician feel that he had been misrepresented in character and depreciated in the moral scale. That is an exact parallel. When Jesus saw an accident in the streets of life He offered His services; but He did not offer His services as a proof of His Messianic skill. He offered them because He could not help it. He brought succour, not to show that He was master of Divine power, but because the sorrows of human nature mastered *Him*. He was never more passive than in His acts of healing. Our calamities overwhelmed Him. His charities taught a lesson, but He did not *bestow* them to teach a lesson. He bestowed them to ease His own pain. Cana's poverty made Him uncomfortable. Bethany's grief bowed Him. The leper's fate lacerated Him. The demoniac's cry disturbed Him. The task of the toilers tired Him. The burdens of the worldly wearied Him. The pain of Dives' thirst parched Him. The remorse of

Magdalene marred His visage. He gave because He must.

My Father, do not let me dispense my charities as a sign! Do not let me say, "This will show that I am rich—dowered with ample means and able to bid the cup overflow!" Do not let me say, "This will show that I am generous—willing to share my superfluities with those who have not enough!" Do not even let me say, "This will show that I am a Christian—a follower of the Messiah and a partaker of His spirit!" Let me say nothing, but "Let there be light!" May I give to my brother because his thirst makes a thorn in me! May I give because my pity is a pain to me, my sorrow a soreness, my compassion a cross! May I give because I cannot help it! To me, as to Thy Christ, the tempter comes, and cries, "If thou wouldst make thyself popular, command that the stones be made bread." I should like to transform the stones of the desert—but not for the tempter's reason. I would not gaze into my looking-glass before I dispense my charity. I would not part with my riches for the sake of being popular. I can never make the stones bread if my own image is behind them. Break that image, O Lord, or I cannot break the bread. I can only give by being self-forgetting.

THE SPONTANEITY OF TRUE CHARITY

Veil me from my own view! Cover me from my own consciousness! Hide me from my own heart! Bury me from my own boastings! Let my charity be childlike! Let my mercy be motiveless! Let my pity be born of passion! Let my gifts be self-regardless! Let me love work latently! Blind me to my own beneficence! Screen me from my own serving! Deafen me to the music of my own deeds! Then over me will the Son of Man sigh no more.

The Flowers of Bethany

"And He led them out as far as to Bethany. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."—JOHN XXIV. 50, 51.

"HE led them out as far as to Bethany." Why did He make *that* the terminus? Why did He only become invisible when He reached Bethany? Because only when we have grasped the lessons of Bethany are we fit to bear in mind the presence of an unseen Christ. Bethany sums up His whole revelation — the brotherhood in life and the brotherhood in death. It shows us the Master at the festive board—uniting man to man in social fellowship. It shows us the Master in the hour of bereavement—bidding man aspire to fellowship beyond the grave. In leading His disciples to Bethany before parting with them, Christ virtually says, "You can do without my visible presence when you have reached these two things —strength for life's feast and strength for life's fast. I will not disappear from your outward gaze until your inward gaze has centred on these

two extremes. You must get as far as Bethany in leading-strings. But when you have looked at the sight revealed there, when you have become adequate to bear the trials of human contact and the trials of human bereavement, you have arrived at the top of the hill, and I can leave you there. There is a time when men are ripe for being left alone—when they have learned enough to dispense with the guiding of a visible hand. Your time of ripeness is come when you have learned the two lessons of Bethany."

My soul, when thou art mourning an absent Lord, keep thine eye on Bethany! When thou art complaining that thy Christ has passed into the silence, keep thine eye on Bethany! When thou art lamenting that He has left no traces of His earthly presence, keep thine eye on Bethany! Remember that He left thee not till He had led thee to the lessons of that home—the Christ in human joy and the Christ in human sorrow. These are the two flowers of Bethany, and they have made the world new. Bethink thee what the world was *without* these Bethany flowers. It saw no God in social joy and it saw no God in death. It had no place for the feast of a common brotherhood; it had no place for comfort at a human grave. Lazarus had few guests for the

banquet; Martha had few wreaths for the tomb. But when the feet of the Lord touched Bethany, there sprang for thee these flowers of hope. Sociality was for thee made sacred; death was for thee made luminous. Henceforth thy joy and thy pain have both a wreath from thy Father. The flower of Martha's feast is on every festal board; the flower of Lazarus' tomb is on every modern grave. Thou canst not *escape* these flowers; they have reddened the evening sky; they have lit with their glow earth's later years. He rose not on Easter wing till He had planted them for thee; and what He has planted time has not uprooted. He has faded from thy view, but His two flowers remain—the sacredness of sociality and the sacredness of sorrow. Keep them; tend them; water them; never let them die! Let no rough hand tear them; let no impure touch soil them; let no blast of grief wither them! Keep them, through the years; keep them, spite of fears; keep them, undimmed by tears! So shalt thou preserve the latest gifts of Easter Morning; so shalt thou keep green the memory of thy Lord.

The Preparation for a Religious Life

"Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name." — PSALM LXXX. 18.

THIS is a singular prayer from the worldly point of view. The common notion is that religion is a dulling process—a cooling-down of the pulses of life. We speak of the yielding to temptation as fast living, and we blame for it what we call the ardour of youth. When a man begins to think seriously we say that he has sobered down, grown mellow, abated in the fire of early years. All this implies one idea—that seriousness of life is a deadening of life. The psalmist takes exactly the opposite view, "Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name." To him religion is not a dulling, but a vivifying, process—a process which does not diminish but which increases the heart's ardour, which does not retard but which accelerates the pulses of being. He would suggest that to become religious a man needs, not less life, but more—not a narrowing but an enlargement of the vital stream. It is generally supposed that

when we begin to live in God we must subside in our life for the world. The psalmist, on the contrary, says that before religion can dawn there must be a natural vivifying of the worldly powers, "Quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name." Religion in the heart is made the result of intensified natural life. And I think it will be found that the psalmist is right. For, what is the prevailing cause of irreligion? I say "irreligion"—not "doubt," for doubt is a form of religious seriousness. What, I ask, is the prevailing cause of irreligion? It is indifference. And what is "indifference"? Is it not simply deadness—want of interest in the things of life. If you would make a religious man serious, you must quicken his pulse to the objects around him. It is this quickening of the pulse that the irreligious man resists. It is to resist intense feeling about worldly things that he often drugs himself with wine. It is to resist intense feeling about worldly things that he flies from flower to flower of pleasure, deadening his appetite as he goes. It is to resist intense feeling about worldly things that he rests not in any spot, however green, but changes his place each hour lest he should read its solemnity. It is by veiling my sight of earth that I lose my sight of heaven.

Lord, they tell me that to call upon Thy name I must forget my own—become dead to that world which surrounds me. I have learned, my Father, that it is not so. I never really knew my need of Thee till the sense of my own life was magnified. It was when my natural heart expanded that I found earth was too small for me. When my pulses were dead I had no thirst for Thy life eternal; earth seemed long enough—sometimes too long. But Thou camest to me with a human love, and the time seemed short; I cried to Thee for a larger span of existence in which to enjoy my soul. It is my quickened human life that longs for Thine immortality. My quickened charity longs for it; I want my poor brothers to have a larger room. My quickened justice longs for it; I want a sequel to unfinished tales. My quickened sense of usefulness longs for it; I want a place for powers that slumber here. My quickened fancy longs for it; I want a beauty more flawless, a music more melodious, than earth can yield. My quickened memory longs for it; I want to see a vindication of my past. My quickened feeling of mystery longs for it; I want to taste the tree of knowledge in Thy paradise, O God. It is by life I embrace *Thy* life; it is by love I respond to Thy

love. It is not by being blunted that I shall prepare to meet Thee. Brace me for Thy breath! Dower me for Thy descending Spirit! Gird me for Thy grace! Heighten me for Thy habitation! Ornament me for Thine ordinances! Paint me for Thy picture-gallery! Stimulate my worldly powers for the service of Thy sanctuary! When Thou hast quickened me I will call upon Thy name.

The Prayer of the Mother of Jesus

"When they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine."—JOHN II. 3.

IT is not often that a scene of gaiety is made a place for prayer. This was a scene of gaiety—it was a marriage-feast. And this was made a place for prayer—by the very mother of Jesus. There is, moreover, a peculiarity about this prayer; it is a prayer for the continuance of the festivity. During a time of revival I have heard of hymns being sung at a football match. But that was meant rather as a reminder of the things of eternity than as a help to the joys of time. In a very different direction is the prayer of the Lord's mother designed to lead. What *she* asks is the supply of something which is lacking to the feast. The wine has failed. It might have made a fine occasion for teaching the vanity of earthly things. But Mary wants to make it an occasion for teaching the opposite. She does not desire the merriment to be damped by signs of poverty. She appeals to Jesus. She does not put her prayer

into words. She simply points to the deficiency, as if the fact of a deficiency would be enough for Him; she says, "They have no wine." "What an unspiritual prayer!" you say; "is it not a petition for the supply of mere temporal need, a request for the perishable things of the flesh!" Pause, my brother. For whom is this secular object desired? Is it for the suppliant herself? No; personally, Mary cared nothing about it. She wants it for a humble family in a Galilean village. She wants to help the pecuniary resources of a household which has been sorely strained by the necessity for an unwonted expenditure. She would like the sun to shine upon the bride all through the day, and she deprecates any cloud that would interrupt its shining. Accordingly, she prays that no untoward omen may seem to throw a shadow over the nuptial pair. Is that secular? I call it the most sacred wish in the world. It mounts to the altar by physical steps; but its offering is purely mental. Mary forgets all about *herself;* she veils herself from her own view, from her own prayer. She looks into her mirror and sees—another. She realises a want not hers, a need not personal. She seeks the highest help in a thing which many would consider a trifle; but she seeks it for others,

and there is nothing so hard as to remember others in trifles. Unselfishness in little matters is the top of the sacrificial hill.

My brother, my sister, there is a place for your prayers in the scene of gaiety. Have you ever thought of the heaviness which may lie behind the mask of flowers? You *expect* to find heaviness at Bethany—it is the place of the tombstone; when you go there, you go *prepared* to pray. But have you never felt that Cana too has its tears! Have you never figured the hearts that are famished at the feast, the souls that are burdened at the banquet, the spirits that are downcast in the dance! Have you never realised that beneath the gay garments there may be the anticipation of a "decease to be accomplished," the shadow of a coming darkness, the sense of some danger to be met to-morrow! If you have not, begin to realise it now! When you go to the shining scene, put a prayer-book in your heart! Whose names will you write there? Will it be the names of those who are enjoying the pleasure of the hour? No, but of those who are *not* enjoying it. Remember those who are regardless of life's roses! Compassionate those who are unconscious of the joy of Cana! Bleed for those who are oblivious of an outward blessing! Pity the hearts that faint amid

the flowers, that groan in the gardens, that languish in the light of day! Pray for their comfort at the feast! Ask for their joy at the banquet! Long that they may be glad amid the music! Seek that they may participate in the laughter! They are too crushed for the companionship of Cana; call upon God to fit them for their joy! So shall you be partakers in the virgin's prayer.

The Origin of Wonder

"Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."—Psa. cxix. 18.

This is a very uncommon idea—that wonder should be the result of intellectual development or the "opening of the eyes." The prevailing notion is the reverse—that wonder belongs to the primitive age alike of the individual and of the race. We say colloquially, "I opened my eyes in astonishment"; the psalmist's expression is the converse, "I became astonished by opening my eyes." What the psalmist says is that the marvels of life escape us by reason of our ignorance. His prayer is just the contrary of the common prayer. The common prayer is, "Make me a simple child again that I may feel the mystery of all things and bow with reverence before them." But the psalmist says, "Emancipate me from the ignorance of childhood, for it is only when I shall see with the eyes of a man that I shall behold the mystery, the marvel, the unfathomable depth, of that ocean on whose bosom I live and move and have my being."

Which is right—the common view or the Bible view? Beyond all question, the latter. Do we find that the sense of wonder belongs to children? Not so. The sense of mystery is precisely what a child does not feel. He asks many questions; but he will accept the crudest answers as quite adequate explanations. He has not a consciousness of limitation. He has a feeling of power beyond his strength; he will put out his hand to catch the moon. He does not at an early date inquire where he came from. He does not ask who made a watch or who made the sun. To him the watch and the sun are both alive—moving by their own strength, upheld by their own power. His eyes are not opened, and therefore his wonder is not awake. To wake his wonder you must unbar the door of his mind. The mystery comes with his experience—not with the want of it. I do not read that men marvelled in Eden; I do that they marvelled in Galilee. Eden was as wonderful as Galilee; but the eyes were not opened. Knowledge is the parent of mystery. Experience is the forerunner of reverence. Only they who have let down the pitcher can utter the cry, "The well is deep."

Lord, there are times in which I long to get back—back to the gates of the morning. I desire

to see again the *first* of things and feel the primitive wonder—to gaze once more on life as it began for me in the garden of my childhood, in the Eden of my dawn. But Thou art teaching me, Thou art teaching Thy psalmist, an opposite prayer, O Lord. Thou art teaching me that there never was a primitive wonder—teaching me that wonder lies not in the rising, but in the setting, sun. Thou art calling to me, not to go back, but to go forward —to the burden and heat of the day, to those experiences which morning cannot yield. Thou art telling me that the mystery is reached at the end, that the marvel is found at the close, that it is "in the last days" Thou wilt "show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath." Thou sendest me to knowledge to learn humility; Thou leadest me to gaze on the crystal fountain that I may cast my crown at Thy feet. Who are Thy poor in spirit, Thy mourners for their own incompetence, Thy meek ones, Thy hungering and thirsting to explore? Thou seekest them on the mount—not in the valley. Not among those who have not begun to climb dost Thou search for them whom wonder has made humble; but on the mountain's brow where the sunbeams play, on the summit of life's hill where the light is unobstructed —there dost Thou look to find them. There

mayst Thou find *me*, O Lord! May I reach the marvel of life's mystery by the path of knowledge! May I gain the true morning in the completed day, the true wonder in the finished experience, the true humility on the top of the hill! The childhood which I seek lies not in yesterday but in tomorrow. I shall begin to marvel when Thou hast enlightened mine eyes.

Christianity in Common Life

"His name shall be in their foreheads."—Rev. xxii. 4.

A man once said to me, "You carry a certificate of health in your face." He was speaking of physical health. But it struck me at the time, and it strikes me still, that, all unconsciously to himself, he was illustrating by a happy metaphor the meaning of this passage. St. John says that in the New Jerusalem the spiritual health of men will be so good that they will carry a certificate of it in their face, or, as he puts it, on their forehead. The idea, of course, is that their Christian character will show itself in the very front of their lives, that it will be patent to the observation of every man. Now, in the old Jerusalem this cannot always be said either of physical or spiritual health. Many people look delicate who are inwardly strong; they have health, but they do not carry it on their foreheads. In like manner many people look frivolous who are very serious. In a recent book a minister tells us how he had received a letter breathing the intensity of religious emotion from

a lady of his congregation whom, to meet in society, he would deem the gayest of the gay, and whom he would believe to be one not at all interested in spiritual things. I would say this woman had the name of Christ in her heart, but not on her forehead. In the New Jerusalem, however, St. John declares that there will be no difference between appearance and reality; men and women will look what they are, and be what they look. The Christ in the heart will be advertised in the countenance. Does that mean there will be only one subject of conversation in the New Jerusalem? No; Christ is not the *subject* of a conversation; He is the *character* of a conversation. That which makes your converse Christian is not what you speak about, but the manner in which you speak. A man could never carry Christ on his forehead if Christ were simply a topic of theology. But Christ is an attitude of the heart—a sacrificial attitude. You may carry His name on your forehead in any subject of conversation, provided you speak to delight another, and not to display yourself. If you speak to display yourself, your listener will always miss the name on the forehead—the stamp of unselfishness; he will read the stamp of egotism. To enjoy you he must see Christ in you.

Lord, on my very forehead write Thy name—on my social manner, on my outward presence, on my secular hours! Thou hast said, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." Why hast Thou said that? It is because the forehead is the climax — because the life is only perfected when it tinges the trivial hour. When I go into society write Thy name on my forehead! Let there be a crucifying of my egotism! Let me break my mirror ere I go! Do not let me consider what clever thing I shall say! Do not let me ponder how the wave of my own words shall raise me! Do not let me meditate on the echoes of my voice! Do not let me study the impression I shall create of my own glory! Let me forget myself—not in oblivion, but in love! There is a forgetfulness which can only come from remembrance—my remembrance of my brother. Be that gift mine, O Lord! it is the sleep of Thy beloved. I would not have my image hid by aught but a brother's image. I would not forget myself in wine, in temper, in recklessness, in despair. But I would lose myself in love. I would have Thy care written on my forehead—the wish to make others glad. I would shine by another's light, I would bloom by another's flower. I would have my words winged

by the joy of giving joy. I would sacrifice self in the scenes men deem sensuous. I would help my brother's social hour. I would cheer my sister's domestic hearth. I would sink to a level with the child's game. I would move to the music of surmounted pleasures. I would live in the pastimes of inferiors. I would manifest an interest, yea, I would experience an interest, in fields of life that have ceased to be gardens for me. I have kept Thy religion for deep things. Plant it also on the surface, O my God! Thy name is in my heart; write it on my forehead!

The Unconscious Service of Christ

"They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall."—MATT. XXVII. 34.

THE drink offered to Jesus was a narcotic. It was offered in mercy and it was offered by those opposed to His doctrines. It was given by the Roman soldiers with a view to mitigate His pain. The act is deeply suggestive. It is an act of friendship performed by antagonists. We are in the habit of dividing the world into Christians and non-Christians. To which of the two classes did these Roman soldiers belong? They were certainly not followers of Jesus; but neither were they against Him. I am told that at the Day of Judgment those will be on the right hand who gave Him drink, and those on the left hand who did not. But here on earth He has received drink from those apparently on the left hand—Roman soldiers have sought to assuage His sufferings! Is it not the same still! We are so fond of sharp divisions that we forget the intermediate shades; but God does not. There are men among us who at this hour are helping Jesus, and who yet profess to yield no allegiance but to Cæsar. They are

numbered among the legions, not among the saints. Yet, wherever the Son of Man is crucified, they are there. They have not yet bowed to His crown; but they are loyal to His cross. They have not adored His majesty; but they have flocked to His manger. They have not come to the wedding at Cana; but they have waited on Him in the wilderness. They are absent from the scene of His transfiguration glory; but they are present at His tragedy in the garden. Wherever humanity is heavy-laden, wherever souls are sad, wherever bodies are burdened, wherever days are darkened, wherever man is mastered by the physical, you will find them there. In the den of poverty, by the couch of pain, at the bed of languishing, on the track of fallenness, you will find them there. Where Noah combats the waters, where Abraham journeys homeless, where Jacob lies on a stair, where Joseph weeps in a dungeon, where Moses mopes in a desert, where Elijah hides in a cave, where Job pines in an infirmary, where the Son of Man fasts in a wilderness, you will find them there. They see not the vintage and the gold; but they bear the vinegar and the gall.

Make room for them in Thy kingdom, O Lord, make room for them in Thy kingdom! Nay, it is

we who are to make room; "the ways of earth are narrow, but the ways of heaven are wide." Help us to have a blessing for Esau even though he is *not* the child of the birthright! May we find a place in our sympathy for the men of the vinegar and the gall! There are some whose faith is the prophecy of their work—and they are the larger number. But, our Father, let us remember that there are others among us whose work is the prophecy of their faith—in whom the hand precedes the eye. They are not led to the manger by the star, but to the star by the manger. They come only to bring gifts to a brother, and one day they will find they have been serving the Christ. Let us give them credit for that coming day; let us accept their work as a prophecy of their faith! Let us take their service as a prediction of their song, their fruit as an omen of their foliage! They see not yet with us eye to eye; but they can touch hand to hand. Grant us their right hand of fellowship, O Lord—their fellowship in work, their fellowship in counsel, their fellowship in liberality, their fellowship in human sympathy, their fellowship in the service of man—their fellowship in what they call secular, in what we call sacred! So shall we stand together beside one cross.

The Comfort to Physical Inferiority

"There is no king saved by the multitude of an host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength."—PSA. XXXIII. 16.

THE doctrine of modern life is the survival of the fittest. Is the psalmist in opposition to this view? No. He is quite willing to admit that the fittest survive; what he says is that their fitness does not lie in the physical. He says that even where the physical strength exists it is not the deepest ground of success. And is he not right? Take the simile in his own mind—the sway of a kingdom. The greatest kingdoms of this world have been swayed by spiritual forces. Look at the Papacy of early days. It was the rule of one frail man—without arms, without territories, without embattled walls, without military followers, without a right to draw the sword. What was the secret of his power? Why did kings hold his stirrup and emperors court his favour and armies melt at his command and rude barbarians bow to his desire? It was because men believed in his holiness—because they held

him to possess the Spirit of God. Or, take our own Indian Empire. That to me is the miracle of history—a small army holding in leash the millions of a conquered land. What is the power by which a little island has bound a chain round an enormous continent? Is it holiness? Alas, no! but it is none the less a power of the spirit. These millions could overwhelm us if they were mentally strong. Theirs is the homage of matter to mind. Is it not written of the forces of animal nature, "A little child shall lead them." In the presence of the great forest of India Britain is physically but a child; yet the myriad denizens of the forest bend beneath her sway. They could crush her at a blow; to what do they bend? To that which as yet is to them a mystery—the power of mind. The gigantic river has been arrested by one pebble; the sweep of the blast has been diverted by the single leaf of a tree. There is no power on earth so secularly strong as that which sleeps within a human soul.

Remember this, thou mother with the delicate babe! Remember this when thou bendest with sorrow over that cradle which seems to enshrine a physical failure! Eve christened her son by the name of Abel—a vapour. The child seemed so fragile as to be but a breath; and the mother

viewed his future with dismay. Was she right? No; that little pigmy in the primitive cradle was the most surviving man of all the race—"he yet speaketh." Remember *that*, when thou lookest upon the physical feebleness of thy babe! It may survive its strong brother Cain in the work of the world. Its cry may be faint; but its cry is not its crown. I have seen treasures of human power hidden in earthen vessels of the poorest mould. I have beheld the Christmas gold glitter in a manger. I have heard the songs of Bethlehem in the midnight air. I have met the Son of Man amid the wants of the wilderness. I have tasted the wine of Cana when the world's wine had ceased to flow. I have listened to the aged Jacob striking the harp of a poet's youth. I have marked Moses triumphing physically by prayer when he was too weak to hold up his physical hands. I have witnessed Elijah baffled in the day of his fire and victor in the hour of his nervelessness. I have perceived Job getting his answer, not from the calm which promised strength, but from the whirlwind which shattered it. O thou that holdest in thine arms a feeble form, remember that the frail casket may enclose a king!

The Sanity of Paul

"I am not mad, most noble Festus."—Acts xxvi. 25.

Paul was a man of singularly sound mind. What is the test of mental sanity? It is the balance of all the powers. A man may be a great genius and yet want perfect soundness. So much fire may have passed into his imagination that the other phases of his mind may have been left cold. It is not the genius that is to blame; it is the inequality of its distribution. Fancy may be aflame while judgment is in ashes. Poetry may have pinions while common-sense is stranded. Sentiment may be soaring while the business of life is prostrated. The peculiarity of Paul's genius is that it avoided this disproportion. He was an enthusiast, but he was an enthusiast all round. He did not glow with one side of his nature and pale with the other; at one and the same moment he kept a light in every room. He has a burning imagination—he figures the rising of the dead; but he does not forget to legislate for the interests of the living. He has a profound intellect—he

reasons about eternal mysteries; but he does not forget to enforce the practice of the hour. He has a boundless faith—he says faith makes a man righteous; but he forgets not that faith is subordinate to love. He has a flaming hope—he looks into the things that are unseen; but he forgets not that shadows themselves are a weight of glory. He is devoted to human freedom—he says that where God's Spirit is, there is liberty; but he refuses to encourage a slave to run away from his master. He is wonderfully forgiving—he would like to bear the sinner's penalty; yet he insists that sin should be atoned for. He is a man of sacrifice—he counts not his life unto himself dear; yet in the cold of the Roman prison he asks that an old cloak be sent to him which he left at Troas. Paul says that God has given him "a sound mind." He might well say that. I never knew a plank so evenly balanced—with one exception. The one exception is the life of his Master. That mind was in him which was also in Christ Jesus; the length and the breadth and the height of it were equal.

Lord, make me, like Paul, a sharer in the balanced mind of Jesus! Thou art called "the Father of spirits"; tune the notes of my spirit into that perfect harmony which is perfect sanity!

It is not less enthusiasm I want; it is enthusiasm about more things. I would not have the mountain lowered; I would have the plain elevated. I would be saved from one-sidedness, O Lord. I remember that Thou saidst to Abram, "Look northward and southward and eastward and westward." I, too, would have that fourfold gaze. It is not intensity that makes me nervous; it is intensity in a single direction. I persuade myself that promotion comes only from the east; and when the east is overclouded I wring my hands in despair. Point me also to the north and the south and the west! Show me that on Thy head are many crowns! When I am persecuted in one city, let me flee into another! There are those who have lost their head because they have lost their money; save me from that doom! Yet I would not be saved by ceasing to value money; rather would I learn that other things besides are valuable. There are minds that have been unhinged by a bereavement; save me from that doom! Yet I would not be saved by loving less the departed; rather would I remember unnoticed flowers which on my way I have passed by. I would be cured by compensation; I would be healed by an enlarged heart. Widen my interests, and I shall be calm. Expand my soul, and I shall

be sober. Make room in my nature, and I shall be unshaken by the storm. Let me see many beauties, and I shall have a balanced mind. Teach me how manifold is Thy grace, and I shall never sink beneath a solitary cloud. I shall have peace upon the sea when I have the mind of Jesus.

The Patience of Christ

"The kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."—Rev. i. 9.

"The kingdom and patience!"—it sounds at first as if these two things were at variance. Does not a kingdom, we say, imply a sense of power; and is not patience built upon uncertainty? Did not Jesus, even in His darkest hour, know that everything would yet be well with Him—that His kingdom would come, that His will would be done, that His name would be glorified; was there any *room* for patience? Yes, and it lay just in the thing which we think excluded it—certainty. We are all wrong in this matter. We deem patience arduous in proportion as we are doubtful of the result. It is exactly the reverse—it is arduous in proportion to the clearness of our hope. Let me put an imaginary case. Suppose that to you there came a secret revelation from heaven regarding your future destiny on earth. Suppose it were revealed to you, under the condition of present reticence, that in the course of ten years you

would be translated into a position of great wealth and power. Suppose, in addition to this, that your present state was one of extreme lowliness—that you were despised and rejected of men, that everybody thought you a poor creature destitute of mental resources and unable to make your way in the world. I ask, What under these circumstances would be the quality you most needed because the quality most difficult to acquire? And I answer, It would be patience. Here are you in the meantime an object of contempt and pity to the bystander—the specimen of a man that cannot get on. Here, on the other hand, floating before your inner eye, is a vision of your coming glory—a vision which, the moment men see it, will raise you at once in their sight to a pinnacle of admiration and make you the idol of the hour. Would not the temptation be almost irresistible to *tell* the vision, to reveal the coming glory! Would not the very certainty of the vision add to the strain! If there were any doubt about it there would be an incentive to silence; but to be reticent in sight of the rainbow, to be silent in the viewing of the star, to be humble in the testifying of your heart that the day is sure to dawn—that is the perfection of restraint, that is the climax of patience.

And that patience, O Son of Man, is Thine.

Why do I marvel so at the restraining of Thy power? It is because the thing restrained *is* power. It is not passion, it is not vexation, it is not impotent rage—it is power. There is a patience that waits by night—and it is worthy of all admiration. But Thine is a patience more glorious still; it is a patience that waits by day. It is a great thing to bear the stroke of injustice when I am under the shadow; but to bear it when I am in the sunshine is greater still. It is not the cloudedness of Thy vision that makes Thy patience with me so wonderful; it is its clearness There are masters who are gentle with their pupils because they themselves are in the mist. But Thou art merciful on the mount, O Christ; Thou art patient amid the kingdom. Thou seest the flower; yet Thou bearest my frost. Thou beholdest the best robe; yet Thou pardonest my preference for rags. Thou gazest on purity; yet Thou hast compassion on my stagnant pool. Thou hearest the song of jubilee; yet Thou sufferest my strains of jarring. Thine is the joy of sympathy; yet Thou hast not consumed the selfish. Thine is the heaven of rest; yet Thou hast not destroyed the rebellious. Thine is the beauty of holiness; yet Thou hast spared the corrupt heart. Thine is the luxury of lavishing; yet Thou hast

forborne to annihilate the loveless. Thine is the pearl of great price; yet Thou restrainest Thy hand from the worshipper of a plaything. O Lord, our Lord, it is Thy kingdom that makes Thy patience grand.

The Humility that is Not Beautiful

"Let no man beguile you by a voluntary humility."—Col. II. 18

Is not this a strange precept? I thought the Bible wanted us all to be humble. I thought Paul specially wanted us to realise that we are all poor creatures. Undoubtedly; but when a man becomes subject to "*voluntary* humility" he does not feel himself a poor creature at all. Voluntary humility is want of aspiration; it is the desire to be no better. True humility is not voluntary. There is always a pain in it. When a man beats on his breast and cries "Unclean!" he is in a hopeful moral state; but he is so precisely because he is not satisfied with the lowliness he confesses. On the other hand, when the demoniacs cry to Jesus, "Art Thou come to torment us before the time!" the sting of the situation is just the fact that the man himself is not stung by it. He is quite content to be what he is. His is a voluntary humility. He knows quite well that his soul consists of only a room and kitchen; but he feels

that to enlarge it into a palace would triple his troubles and multiply his expenses. He can move more easily about in this narrow environment, can find things closer to his hand. He prefers his small garden to the courts of the Lord; it costs less, it has fewer cares. He would rather be in Paris than in Paradise. The thought of heaven adds a new terror to death. He resents the introduction of sacred subjects. He resents all reports of spiritual manifestation. He wants to think of heaven as a vague place, a far-off place, a place in the mist. His comfort is his *uncertainty* about it. If he heard of a messenger coming from the silent land, he would have him stopped. He is spiritually almost in the position of a Little Englander. He would not exactly tell his soul to give up its colonies beyond the sea, but he would say: "Never think about your colonies; never dream of them; keep within the humble limits of your own home; live by the day and lay not up your treasures beyond the needs of the hour!"

My soul, there is a false contentment which is not made for thee. Humility is good, but not a voluntary humility. It is well thou shouldst know thyself to be in the valley, but it is not well thou shouldst *love* to be there. Hast thou considered the difference between a repentant and

an unrepentant sinner? It lies in a very narrow line—too narrow for even a microscope to see. At the moment of thy repentance thou art side by side in the same valley with the soul that is dead in sin. The lowliness is quite equal. But the unequal thing is the degree of contentment. The dead soul is *voluntarily* humble: thou art humble under protest. The dead soul is satisfied with its miry clay; thou art crying for a couch of down. The dead soul is saying, "What a sweet repose!" thou art singing, "O for the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest!" The dead soul is happy in its hell; thou hast lifted up thine eyes in torment. The dead soul sees no mountain; thou art gazing on the hills. The dead soul is at home in death—it has no discomfort in the garment; thou hast the sense of numbness, the feeling of torpor, the stiffness of the limb, the weakness of the arm, the inertness of the sinew. The dead soul does not wish the organ to play, for it loves not music; thou art waiting for the notes that never come. It is a *thought* that makes the difference between him and thee; reverence thy thoughts, O my soul!

Spiritual Chloroform

"Translated that he should not see death."—Heb. xi. 5.

The translation of the soul may precede the death of the body. It was predicted of the aged Simeon that "he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ"; and our Lord Himself declares "there are some standing here who shall not taste of death till they see the Kingdom of God." The idea was not that old Simeon should never die, nor that some of Christ's disciples should escape death. You will best arrive at the thought by an analogy. Imagine that twenty years before the discovery of chloroform a medical man had thus addressed a scientific assembly: "There are some now before me who will not need to undergo any physical operation until a physical operation shall become a thing without pain." That would be an exact parallel to the New Testament promise—only it would be in the sphere of the body, not of the soul. It would be the prophecy of a time coming when the

body should be raised above the susceptibility to pain, "translated that it should not see the coming operation." The operation would come all the same, but it would come unknown to the recipient. Such is the thought applied to death. It is the promise of a spiritual chloroform. For there *is* a spiritual chloroform. It frees the soul from pain in the opposite way to that in which the physical remedy frees the body from pain. The physical chloroform acts by making the man unconscious. But the spiritual chloroform works by creating in the man a new consciousness. I am made oblivious of my suffering, not by darkness, but by light. If you are carried beside a precipice, there are two ways in which it may be hid from you; you may shut your eyes, or you may fix your eyes on a point in the heavens. This latter is God's chloroform for the hour of death. He does not bid us shut our eyes; He bids us lift our eyes. He does not send us to sleep; He wakes us to a new impulse. He does not still our fear of lethargy; He stills it by excitement—by the sight of a coming joy. He eclipses the cloud by a star; He deadens the pain by a pleasure; He cheers the silence by a song; He hides the valley by the image of coming wings on which we shall mount as eagles into heights afar.

Lord, send me the Divine anæsthetic for the parting hour! I would not conquer the fear of death by somnolence, but rather by a new vivacity. It is more life and fuller that I want. There is a sleep, a freedom from care, which Thou givest to Thy beloved; but it comes not through lullaby, but through love. Be this my casting out of fear, O Lord! Translate my soul *before* death! Place me on the summit of Pisgah ere I reach the valley of Moab! Show me the Promised Land ere I touch the banks of Jordan! Let the dove precede the desert! Let the crown precede the cross! Let the guest-chamber precede Gethsemane! Let the transfiguration precede the travail! Keep me not waiting for the grapes till I enter Canaan; send the clusters into my wilderness! Keep me not waiting for the daybreak to end the struggle with death's angel! Send the daybreak first; arm me by joy; nerve me by light! Let me not halt on the thigh till I have wings in the spirit! May I not grow old in body till I have taken the Child-Christ into my soul! Then shall I pass through the fiery furnace and feel no pain; for the light of Thy presence shall blind me to the shadows, and the music of Thy voice shall blunt me to the storm.

The Sphere Not Prohibited

"When He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, There is nothing from without a man that can defile him.' —Mark vii. 14, 15.

It is not often that Jesus "calls the people unto Him" for the purpose of giving an address. He commonly finds the people already gathered, and the address is a matter of accident. But here is a solemn exception. I say, solemn. If Christ called the people to give them a message, He must have thought it a very important message. And so it is. I have often figured to myself a strange imagining. I have thought, "What an advantage it would be if an angel from heaven were to walk through our streets, and were to write on the door of each place of resort an inscription of its character!" Here is an inscription given, not for each door, but for the whole street—a sweeping inscription which covers everything: "Nothing from without can defile a man." It is the sweepingness that startles us. "Nothing from without." What!—*nothing?*

Not the theatre, not the opera, not the concert-room, not the public dancing-hall? No—not in so far as these are things outside. These buildings are all right until they are painted—and it is the soul that paints them. All the tarnish they ever get is from the brush of the soul. You go to walk on a Sunday because other people are at church; you will show them how you are emancipated from superstition. The walk makes you feel atheistic, reckless, disdainful of sacred things. Have you got harm, then, from the outside landscape? No, it is the landscape has got harm from *you*. Why did you go out with the belief that your Sunday walk was prohibited! It was that belief which poisoned the whole air. You thought you were doing something forbidden; and the trees of the garden refused to meet your eye. The flowers had no bloom; the fields had no fragrance; the leaves had no freshness; the birds had no music; the breezes had no quickening—your walk was spoiled by your soul. If you had only made your walk a worship, if you had gone, not to repel man but to meet God, the outside would have smiled upon you. The roses would have been radiant; the grass would have been green; the thrush would have been thrilling; the woods would have waved their welcome. The

soul that feels God's presence in the garden will be hurt by no plant of Eden.

My brother, art thou deploring thy worldly surroundings? I have heard thee lamenting the gaiety of thine environment. I have heard thee say: "I have been brought up in a vortex of fashion, in a whirl of social engagements, in a round of outward pleasures; where have I had space for Christ?" Just there—in the very heart of these outward pleasures. Why does Christ say that these cannot defile a man? Because there is room for His cross in them. Thou canst plant His cross in every one of them. Did not Martha serve at her own feast—forget to help herself in the joy of helping others! Where canst thou better take an inferior seat than in the social hour! Is there not room for sacrifice then! Then is the temptation to overshadow thy neighbour; thou shalt resist it in Christ. Then is the temptation to absorb the interest; thou shalt conquer it in Christ. Then is the temptation to spread a slander; thou shalt kill it in Christ. Then is the temptation to think of thine own superiority; thou shalt crucify it in Christ. Then is the temptation of the flesh to override the spirit; thou shalt restrain it in Christ. Then is the temptation to exceed in the flowing bowl;

thou shalt quench it in Christ. Bring Christ to thy feast, my brother! Invite Him to thy board, as Matthew did! Seat Him at thy table, as Martha did! Consult Him on thy courses, as the host of Cana did! Send Him not into the wilderness! Seek Him not in thy fasting hour! Go not out to meet Him among the tombs! Thou shalt find most room for Him where the crowds gather, where the joy-bells ring, where life's roses lie. There is no place for His cross like the field of the world.

The Advantage of an Indirect Aim

"A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel."—II. CHRON. XVIII. 33.

THE story connected with this passage is a very suggestive one. Ahab, king of Israel, was regarded by the righteous as the enemy of God, and by all classes as the enemy of man. Elaborate plans were laid to put down his influence. These all failed. Every effort to arrest his baleful hand proved abortive. A whole army tried it. They directed all their arrows toward the one man; but they all missed him. At last a strange thing happened. An obscure soldier in that army was trifling with his time—shooting an arrow to amuse himself. The trifle became a tragedy. The shot meant for the air struck the enemy of righteousness; he fell, and died. The event came from a hand that was not seeking it, from an act that was not designing it. It is no uncommon experience. How often you and I get without effort a thing for whose acquisition we have striven long and

vainly! It seems at the last to come to our very door. You remember a name when you have ceased to search for it, when you have begun to think of something else. You exert an influence when you have given up trying to do so, when you have left your friend severely alone. I do not think anxiety to achieve an end is favourable to its achievement. I am quite sure that all anxiety about a merely personal aim diverts the arrow from the goal. When God promised Abraham a great kingdom He added, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." He was to get the former by shooting at the latter. I have never known a man to win physical success by making physical success the direct object of his aim. The mark of the worldly prize is hit by aiming at something different. David sang to the woods ere he was overheard by kings. The broken box of ointment filled with its fragrance the house of humanity; yet it was meant but for one head. The arrow that strikes the mark of eternal fame is the arrow that aims at the welfare of the hour.

Young man, beware of thine aim in life! I have seen books written in thy behalf with such titles as these: "How to Get On," "How to Succeed in the World." Send not thine arrow toward any such goal! Success comes by seeking other things.

Men tell thee that industry promotes wealth. So it does; but I would have thee to be industrious on other grounds than that. I would have thee labour for love—for the help of those around thee. Men tell thee that to win friends will open for thee the doors of life. So it will; but not for this would I have thee bend thy bow. I would have thee win friends because friendship is sweet—sweet though the doors be shut, sweet though the fountains be sealed. Men tell thee that the record of a good life will be a testimonial to forward thine interests. So it will; but I would not have thee aim at the casket instead of the gold. Goodness has often a dowry; but the dowry adds not to her beauty. Put not aught *before* her beauty! Doubtless her wings can raise thee to a temporal height; but the view from the height can never be so beautiful as the wings. Thine arrow may strike the temporal fruit and bring it down; but let it strike by accident! Aim not at the fruit; aim at the leaf and the flower! Seek the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, and there will fall into thy bosom other apples as well. Seek purity, and there will come peace. Seek friendship, and there will come fortune. Seek goodness, and there will come glory. Seek sobriety, and there will come strength. Seek wisdom, and there will come wealth. Seek

reflection, and there will come repute. Seek benevolence, and there will come blessing. Seek Christ, and there will come the cup of joy. When the bow shoots at an unselfish venture it will bring to thy feet a personal gain.

The Mystery of Christ's Fame

"He could not be hid."—Mark vii. 24.

There is a great peculiarity about the fame of Jesus: it came to Him through shut doors. For one thing, His own *will* shut the door against it. He wanted to be hid—to do good by stealth and escape the praise of it; He was afraid lest Divine majesty should crush human love. When He performed a benevolent action He charged His followers that they should not make it known; when He was accidentally revealed in glory He said, "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be risen"—removed from human sight. The men who win fame in this world are usually the men who strive for it. But the peculiarity of Jesus is that worldly fame beset Him when He was striving to avoid it. That is the paradox which Paul points out in the Epistle to the Philippians. He says that God gave Him a name that is above every name at the very time when He was performing an act of self-burial—when He was emptying Himself, assuming the form of a servant, wearing the fashion of human poverty, taking a lowly place, carrying the burden of the cross, closing His career by a premature

death. And then, every natural *circumstance* in the life of Jesus was unfavourable to His fame. His birth was humble, His surroundings poor, His home isolated, His youth toiling, His brothers adverse, His era prosaic, His country a Roman province, His auditors unlettered, His enemies influential, His ideal unshared. Is anything conceivable more opposed to fame! And yet, in spite of all, "He could not be hid." He has broken through the thickest cloud in the universe —the cloud of social obscurity. Truly was it written, "At *midnight* there was a cry heard, 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh!'" His sunshine was unheralded by dawn; it flashed from a rayless sky. It was by *night* that Bethlehem's plains were flooded with His glory. His light shone from darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not—never has comprehended it. It has been the mystery of mysteries how a bad world has glorified a great soul. If there had been physical ornaments round that soul, we could have understood it; but it passes human knowledge to explain how in a field consecrated to materialism a life of spiritual beauty "could not be hid."

My soul, thou art in presence to-day of the same mystery. Everything around thee is fitted to *hide* Jesus. All the forces of the Roman

Empire are reigning yet. The nations are held together by an iron chain. The lands are bounded by battalions; the seas are fenced by fleets; the crowds are pulsating with passions; the merchants are greedy of gold; the learned are steeped in scepticism; the fashionable are dizzy with the dance; the weighted are victims of the vine; the successful are cowards for the cross. Yet at this moment Christ is King of Kings—crowned by the very lives that are unworthy of Him. Hast thou considered these words, "Behold He cometh with clouds!"—*spite* of clouds. They are as true now as they were on the plains of Bethlehem. Canst thou explain His empire! Seest thou not that now, as then, the deformed have crowned the beautiful! It is still the Roman that is plaiting His wreath to-day. Matter brings a rose to spirit. Force puts a flower on gentleness. Selfishness pours a libation on charity. Covetousness sends a greeting to sacrifice. War hails the advent of peace. Corruption bends at the shrine of purity. Retribution applauds the dawn of mercy. Pleasure lays a diadem on the cross. The tyrant bows his head to the emancipator of the slave. Whence this mystery that is manifested to thy sight! Truly the miracle of the Advent is living still!

Man the Vicegerent of God

"God hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation."—II. Cor. v. 18.

We often ask the question, Why does God permit the continuance of so much sin in the world? The district visitor going her rounds amid scenes of moral misery, the philanthropist threading his way through paths of deep pollution, the home missionary coming into contact with forms of life that would make the angels weep—all put the question to their heart, Why does not God interfere? And to each there ought to be one answer: He does interfere, He is at this moment interfering; He is interfering through *you*. This is exactly what Paul says: "God has given unto *us* the ministry of reconciliation." This is a thing we seldom think of in our pessimistic moments. We often exclaim at the sight of flagrant iniquity, "I wish I were in God's place for one day!" Little do we deem that this is exactly what God wishes too. God has asked us

to stand in His place, not for one day, but for many days. He has asked us to take up His burden—the burden of human sin. He has asked us to interfere for Him, to act for Him, to strive for Him, to love for Him. God's government is a vicarious government. He has never at any time ruled by His own hand. At first He made His angels ministering spirits; then He added the ministry of His Son; now He invites you and me to join the league of pity. Why has He made His government a vicarious government? I have heard men object to the belief in guardian angels on the ground that God needs no help. Neither does He; but the angels do, you and I do. It is no relief to the Father that other hands are lifted to do His work; but it is a vast benefit to the "other hands." It is not for *His* sake that God makes you His fellow-labourer; it is for your own. He has put the reins of the moral world into your hands—not because the steeds are unmanageable, but because you need training as a charioteer. When you go forth to dispense your charities among the destitute, never forget that you are yourself the largest beneficiary. Never forget that at the very moment when you lavish your gifts you are the man who in God's sight is receiving the costliest boon. Never forget that in the hour and

the power of sacrifice you are obtaining a greater privilege than ever you bestow.

Lord, put me in Thy place for one day, Thy moral place, the place where Thy heart dwelleth. Commit to me Thy ministry of reconciliation! Let me live for one hour in Thine experience! Let me feel for one moment Thy power of loving, Thy strength of sympathising! Men often pray that they may enter into Thy joy; I think I should first like to enter into Thy pain. I should like to feel Thy grief for man's grovelling, Thy sorrow for man's selfishness, Thy pity for man's poverty, Thy tears for man's temptation. The Church urges me to pray to Thee for the sinner; Thou biddest me pray to the sinner for Thee; Thou tellest a Paul to cry, "We beseech you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God!" Put Thy prayer to the sinner in my heart, O Lord; let me stand at his door and knock! Let me repeat in miniature Thy Gospel mission! Let me put on in sympathy my brother's tattered robe! Not from the height of heaven let me speak to him! Let me go down to meet him in his own valley! Let me stand on the steps of his humiliation! Let me give him my hand in his heaviness! Let me claim my brotherhood in his brokenness! Let me proffer my fellowship in his fallenness! Let me call him

comrade in his condemnation! Let my cheer precede chastisement, my smile precede solemnity, my comfort precede counsel! Let me bring him to the Mount before I point him to the Cross! So shall I repeat Thy work of reconciliation.

The Calamity that Hurts Not

"Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."—DAN. VI. 23.

IT is not enough for a man to be taken out of his den. When he has been raised from his calamity the question remains, Has it hurt him? It seems a small thing to record of Daniel that after his life had been preserved from the lions "no manner of hurt was found upon him." But in truth the great fear in such cases is *just* their after-effects. Calamity has not always a good influence upon a man. It changes many a soul for the worse. There are hundreds who after their liberation from the den of lions live as if they were still in the den. There are men who have risen to opulence after a hard fight with poverty and who never forget their early scars. They resent the years that the locusts have eaten. They preserve a demeanour of frigidness, of sourness, of cynicism towards all the events of life; they damp the enthusiasm of those who are entering in. It

is a great thing if a man can emerge from the den not only sound in body but unharmed in mind. What enabled Daniel to come forth mentally whole? The passage states the reason explicitly —"He believed in his God." There it is! The mental effects of calamity can only be conquered by a mental attitude. It is a great mistake to suppose that we require trust in God merely for the future; we need it as much for the past. We think of Daniel as trusting in God before he was thrown in; he required an equal faith after he had come out. We doubt, not only in the hour of danger, but in the hour of retrospect. Faith may waver over the question, What if this befall me? But it can also waver over the question, Why has this befallen me? If I am to be free from mental gloom, I must see a bow in the cloud of yesterday as well as in the cloud of to-morrow. God must justify to my soul the shadows of last night. Nothing else will obliterate my inward scars; nothing else will enable me to come forth from the den unhurt.

Shine on my yesterday, O Lord, shine on my yesterday! Throw back Thy radiant glory upon the days that have been! I can say, with one of Thy children, "I do not ask to see the *distant* scene"; but I should like a glimpse of the scene

through which I have travelled. It is something to be able to say, " I fear no future foe " ; but it is not all. I may be fearless for the future, and yet a coward for the days gone by. I may be looking forward to another world just because I have had a rose withered in this. Not thus would I meet Thee, O my God. I would not come to Thee from my den of lions with a heart bruised and maimed. I would conquer my *past* as well as my future. I would be *satisfied* with the travail of my soul. I would *approve* my six days of seeming chaos. I would discover that the evenings have blended with the mornings to make one day. It is not enough that Thou hast prepared an ark for the flood; I must know for what Thou hast prepared the flood itself. Its waters may still roll over me after they are gone; they may have drowned my heart though they have spared my life. Forbid it, Lord! Illumine my crosses of the past! Shine on the dark places of my vanished years! Light up the mystery of my adverse hours! Unveil the secret of my moments in the valley! Let me see the beauty of Marah's bitterness! Let me hear the music of Bethany's mourning! Let me learn the comfort of Calvary's pain! I shall never be free from hurt till Thou hast lighted up the den.

The Veiling from Man of Divine Energy

"He commanded the people to sit down, and He took the seven loaves, and gave to His disciples to set before them."—MARK VIII. 6.

SUCH was Christ's method of distributing the bread among a starving multitude. From a physical point of view it must have been highly satisfactory to them—they were hungry. But from a religious point of view it was perhaps a little disconcerting. I think they would have liked better to have been served by His own hand. From a Christian standpoint one is disposed to ask, If Jesus had "compassion on the multitude," why did He consult the disciples at all? *They* certainly had very little compassion; they did all they could to damp His benevolence. Why make use of such miserable agents, such retarding agents? These could only carry His bequest in *wagons;* He could have borne it Himself on wings. Why did He not use the wings? Why commit an errand so momentous into hands so sluggish when His own hand was burning to fulfil

the deed? It was because, great as was His compassion for the multitude, He had a compassion greater still for His own disciples. It was sad the multitude should be hungry; it was sadder still that His followers should be blunted to that hunger. We all know that the Divine mercy could at any time take a short road to the Land of Canaan—could send showers of manna in a moment and banish want at a word. That would be compassion on the multitude, but not compassion on me. The multitude would have the broken bread; but I should lose the *breaking* of the bread—the greater blessing of the two. Is it not written as Christ's own testimony, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"? Shall mine be only the smaller joy—the joy of the world as distinguished from the joy of the Lord! Shall I have only the gift and not the giving, the bread and not the breaking, the share and not the sharing! Shall the luxury of ministration be confined to the heavens! Shall it be only angels that wait upon man's wilderness, that grieve over man's Gethsemane! Shall all the luscious fruits of the tree of life be on the other side of death! Shall there be no grapes of Eshcol sent to *me*—no forecast specimens of the heavenly joy! Why appeal to father Abraham to help Dives! Is

earth to have no share in the inheritance of the saints in light! Surely the privileges of the Christian are not *all* beyond the grave!

Lord, there are many whom Thou canst send to the Gentiles—the impoverished of the earth; but send *me!* Myriads of celestial spirits wait to do Thy bidding; but send *me!* I am slower in hand and feebler in heart than they; yet send *me!* Send me *because* I am slower in hand and feebler in heart! It is not Thy holy angels that need to be trained in the joys of Paradise; it is I. Shall I receive no message in the language of heaven—the language of sympathy! Shall all Thy messages of mercy be carried by Gabriel and Michael, and none by me! My parents send me to school to prepare me for *their* world; hast Thou, my Father, no school in preparation for Thine! Is it not well that when I look upon distress I should not see Thy help too near! If by every couch of pain I beheld Thy ministrant angel I should never learn the science of sympathy. I thank Thee that Thine angels are invisible. I thank Thee that Thy chariot moves on velvet wheels. I thank Thee that when Thou risest with healing in Thy wings their beating is unheard by man. I thank Thee that in Thine hour of compassion for the multitude Thou hast

hid Thy hand: it has made room for mine. Thy silence has been my speech; Thy withdrawal has been my walking; Thy hiding has unveiled my heart; Thy resting has caused me to run; Thy cloud has made clear my mission; Thy pause has prompted my progress; Thine absence has aided my appearing; the shadow over Thy face has been the shining of mine. I bless Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast left a vacant spot for *me*.

The Lesson which Makes Obedience Light

"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."—HEB. v. 8.

I UNDERSTAND the meaning to be that Christ learned the value of obedience from the *adverse* things of life. The common view as to the value of obedience is the opposite; we think it is learned by the wearing of flowers. A father very commonly says to his son, "If you conduct yourself as I desire, I will give you a handsome allowance; when you transgress, it will be withdrawn." His object is to teach his son obedience by making him learn the value of *luxuries*. But here it is the reverse; the Child-Jesus is taught the profit of obedience by learning the value of life's thorns. In *Christ's* experience this is universally true; the crown of His obedience has come from His cross. In looking back He feels that the glory of submission to the Father's will has been found by Him, not in reaping the fruits of Eden, but in

reaping the fruits of Gethsemane—that the grain of wheat has flourished precisely in that spot where it has fallen into the ground and died. But we imagine this to be something abnormal, something unique, something which does not apply to *us*. In truth it is the "law of the spirit of life." There will come to you a time here or elsewhere when you will learn the glory of that obedience which now puts you under a cloud. But it is the cloud that will *teach* you its glory. You look back on the hours you spent in an office, ground down under the pressure of hard work. What is your verdict? Do you say, "It was worth while to be obedient and not abandon my career, for I have now become free and rich and independent, and can forget all the hardships of yesterday"? No, rather will your verdict be: "It was worth while to submit to hardships, for these hardships have made me a man. I bless God that He strengthened me to bear my thorns, for I am indebted to my thorns more than to my roses. It is the briars that have braced me. It is the storms that have steadied me. It is the nights that have nerved me. It is the disappointments that have dowered me. It is the losses that have leavened me. It is the heart-aches that have humanised me. It is the misadventures that

have made me manly. It is the buried seeds that have given me bloom. I have learned the glory of obedience by the things which I have suffered."

My Father, never let me say of the physical tares of life, "An enemy has done this!" Never let me refuse a cup because it is bitter nor a cross because it is heavy! I do not say, "Help me to believe that one day they will be superseded!" I ask a deeper faith than that; help me to believe that one day they will be glorified! My lot has been to dwell in a hut amid the desert sands, and I have submitted without murmuring; I have felt that obedience was my duty. But I hope yet to learn that obedience was my glory. How shall I learn that, O my Father? Will it be by transference to Thy house with many mansions? That would not vindicate my hours of privation; it would only proclaim a release from the days of school. I want better than that, my Father. I want school itself to be irradiated. I want to be magnified in the things which I have *suffered.* I want the old hut to be *one* of Thy many mansions. I want to come back to my ancient wilderness and find it a great metropolis. I want to feel that my residing there has something to do with the change—that I planted one rose which blossomed, shed one beam which kindled, brought one breeze which

fanned the spark of life. Build up my waste places, O my God! Crown my crosses; gild my Gethsemanes; beautify my Bethanys; wreathe my reverses; make steps of my sorrows; bring treasures from my trials; strike music from my mourning; reveal that my road to Paradise was the pathway of my pain! I shall learn the glory of obedience when I see my desert's bloom.

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